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Weird Tales

MARCH

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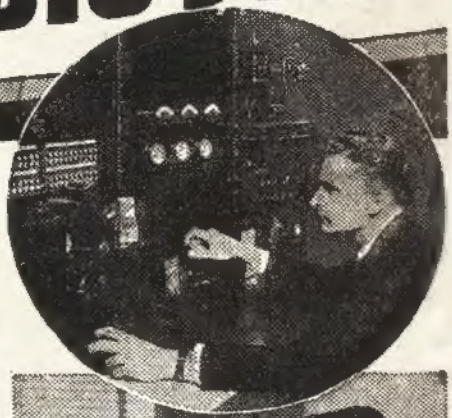

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Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

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WHENCE came the knowledge that built the Pyramids and the mighty Temples of the Pharaohs? Civilization began in the Nile Valley centuries ago. Where did its first builders acquire their astounding wisdom that started man on his upward climb? Beginning with naught they overcame nature's forces and gave the world its first sciences and arts. Did their knowledge come from a race now submerged beneath the sea, or were they touched with Infinite inspiration? From what concealed source came the wisdom that produced such characters as Amenhotep IV, Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, and a host of others?

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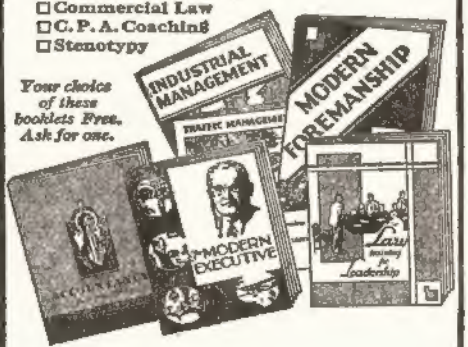

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DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A strange man in Los Angeles, known as "The Voice of Two Worlds," tells of astonishing experiences in far-off and mysterious Tibet, often called the land of miracles by the few travelers permitted to visit it. Here he lived among the lamas, mystic priests of the temple. "In your previous lifetime," a very old lama told him, "you lived here, a lama in this temple. You and I were boys together. I lived on, but you died in youth, and were reborn in England. I have been expecting your return."

The young Englishman was amazed as he looked around the temple where he was believed to have lived and died. It seemed uncannily familiar, he appeared to know every nook and corner of it, yet—at least in this lifetime—he had never been there before. And mysterious was the set of circumstances that had brought him. Could it be a case of reincarnation, that strange belief of the East that souls return to earth again and again, living many lifetimes?

Because of their belief that he had formerly been a lama in the temple, the lamas welcomed the young man with open arms and taught him rare mysteries and long-hidden practices, closely guarded for three thousand years by the sages, which have enabled many to perform amazing feats. He says that the system often leads to almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind, can be used to achieve brilliant business and professional success as well as great happiness. The young man himself later became a noted explorer and geographer, a successful publisher of maps and atlases of the Far East, used throughout the world.

"There is in all men a sleeping giant of mindpower," he says. "When awakened, it can make man capable of surprising feats, from the prolonging of youth to success in many other worthy endeavors." The system is said by many to promote improvement in health; others tell of increased bodily strength, courage and poise.

"The time has come for this long-hidden system to be disclosed to the Western world," declares the author, and offers to send his amazing 9000 word treatise—which reveals many startling results—to sincere readers of this publication, free of cost or obligation. For your free copy, address the Institute of Mentalphysics, 213 South Hobart Blvd., Dept. 91L, Los Angeles, Calif. Readers are urged to write promptly, as only a limited number of the free treatises have been printed.

Modern day Fausts raise hell among the skyscrapers of Manhattan — and conjure up daemons in the heart of downtown New York!

Hell

"She stood surrounded by the bobbing, weaving shapes . . ."

1. Devil's Brew

"LET me ask you a question," said my visitor. "Would you go to hell for ten thousand dollars?"

"Brother, just show me the money and tell me when the next train leaves," I told him.

On Earth

HIGH VOLTAGE NOVELETTE OF SATAN IN TUXEDO—

BY ROBERT BLOCH

". . . and behind her was caged the figure of Satan!"

"I'm serious."

I sat back and did my goldfish imitation —staring with my mouth open. I'm pretty good at it.

But Professor Keith was pretty good at looking serious. Too good. After a minute I closed my mouth and just stared.

"Wait a minute," I said. "You haven't got a cloven hoof. You didn't appear out of a cloud of smoke. You're not crazy, and you don't take drugs. You're Professor Phillips Keith, Associate Director of Rocklynn Institute. And you're offering me ten thousand dollars to go to hell."

The pudgy little man with the graying hair adjusted his spectacles and smiled. He looked for all the world like a kindly bishop as he answered, "I'd rather see you go to hell for me than anyone else."

"That's very flattering of you, I'm sure. But, Professor—perhaps you could explain yourself a little more fully before I decide. A man doesn't get an offer like this every day."

Plump fingers held out a newspaper clipping. "Read this."

SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE TO BECOME WITCHCRAFT DEN

The world-famous Rocklynn Institute will be transformed into a rendezvous for goblins and demons, according to the plans of Thomas M. Considine, wealthy philanthropist.

Considine has authorized a donation of $50,000 to be used in what he describes as a "scientific study of sorcery and Black Magic."

Professor Phillips Keith today announced that Rocklynn Institute is "seriously contemplating" the possibilities of the project. Scientific basis for ancient magic is by no means improbable, Keith declared, and such a study may yield valuable results.

Vendors of black cats, dried toads, and love-philtres might find it worth their while to apply at the Rocklynn Institute in the near future.

"Lousy piece of writing," I commented, handing the clipping back to Keith. "Now, what's the real story?"

Keith rose.

"Why not come along with me and find out for yourself?" he asked.

"Don't mind if I do." I grabbed my hat and followed Keith down to the waiting car. We weaved into traffic before I broke the silence again.

"So it's no gag, then," I mused. "Not just a publicity stunt. You're really going through with something like this?"

The eyes behind the spectacles were penetrating in their gray intensity. "I've never been more serious about anything in my life," declared Keith.

"It was I who badgered Thomas Considine into donating that money. For years it has been my ambition to conduct experiments along this line. Too bad the papers got hold of the story—but from now on there will be no publicity. No one must know that Rocklynn Institute is attempting to raise the dead and conjure up daemons in the heart of downtown New York."

Now if there is one thing I have learned in this Vale of Tears, it's this—you don't tell a man he's crazy when he has fifty thousand dollars to spend. Particularly if he has just offered you ten thousand of that fifty.

So all I said was, "That's fine. But where do I fit into this picture?"

Keith smiled, as he swung the car towards a parking lot.

"Simple. Your name was given to me as a writer of so-called horror-fiction. As such I expect you to be more or less conversant with demonology and witchcraft lore."

"Right. But I certainly don't believe such bunk."

"Exactly! That's my point—while you are in a position to understand what we're attempting, you still don't believe. In other words, you are an average, skeptical representative of John Public. That's why you were chosen to act as official eye-witness and historian of our endeavors. You know what's going on, but you don't believe in it. You will be shown. In other words, you're being hired as a witness."

"You mean ten thousand dollars for standing around and watching you play witch? Ten grand to see you ride a broomstick?"

Keith laughed. "You're almost too skeptical. Come on. I think you need an immediate example."

We entered the skyscraper, purred upwards in the private elevator, stepped briskly across the business-like outer lobby of Rocklynn Institute's spacious quarters on the penthouse floor. Keith led me along the hall to a door marked *Private.*

He pushed it open, beckoned.

Usually I hate such doors. I hate the smugness of their curt warning. *Private!*

But if ever a door deserved such a marking, this one did. For it barred madness.

BLACK madness, in a velvet draped room. Red madness, in the flickering braziers winking demonic eyes from shadowy niches.

We stood in a dark chamber, hidden in the topmost recesses of a modern skyscraper—a dark chamber, reeking of blood, musk, hashish, and the tomb.

It was a room torn from the Fifteenth Century, a room torn from ancient dreams.

True, the tables and shelvings were modern, but they groaned with the impedimenta of forgotten nightmares. I looked down at the first ledge beside me, and a casual glance convinced.

A rack of test-tubes reared from the surface. Modern Pyrex, but labeled with inscriptions old as wizardry. "Bat's blood." "Mandrake root." "Deadly nightshade." "Mummy dust." "Corpse fat." And worse. Much worse.

There were shiny new refrigerators in one corner, but they bulged with unnamable carcasses. There were queerly bubbling vats near a small open fire. One long shelf held alchemic instruments. Jars of herbs stood amidst vials of powdered bones. The floor was crisscrossed with pentagons and zodiacal designs drawn in blue chalk, phosphorescent paint, and some substance that yielded a dull, rusty red.

One wall held books—books I didn't like. The light gleamed on musty tomes once hugged to the withered bosoms of witches, once grasped by the bony, trembling talons of long-dead necromancers.

For just an instant I stood at Professor Keith's side, as the iron door closed behind us. For just an instant my eyes ran their spidery pattern across the red glare and black shadow of that room.

And then something rose out of the farther gloom, something wheeled and scuttled from the darkness, something moved in shroud-white silence across the floor.

I jumped two feet.

"Meet Doctor Ross," said Keith.

"Ulp!" I commented.

Doctor Ross's oval face moved toward me. A slim hand darted out. "Charmed," said Doctor Ross.

"Ulp!" I declared again.

"Can't you say anything but 'Ulp'?" inquired Doctor Ross, with some curiosity.

"Well, you'd 'Ulp' too if you were dragged into a chamber of horrors and had a zombie come at you and the zombie turned out to be a pretty girl with—"

I stopped. But it had slipped out, and I wasn't too sorry. Because Doctor Ross was a remarkably attractive young lady. Her blond hair was not marred by any medical severity of coiffure, and her piquant features were very adequately rouged and decorated. Even the white surgical gown did not wholly conceal features which would make Will Hays foam at the mouth if he saw her in a sweater.

"Thank you," said Doctor Ross, without embarrassment. "And welcome to Rocklynn Institute. I presume you are interested in witchcraft?"

"If all witches are like you—" I began, but Keith cut me off.

"Lily Ross isn't Circe, you know," he remarked, but his eyes twinkled. "And you aren't being hired to pass out compliments. There's work to do. We've got a demon to raise this afternoon."

Right then and there it stopped being funny.

Here I was, yanked into a weird chamber atop a skyscraper, in the hands of two lunatics whose avowed purpose was to experiment in Black Magic, and ordered to stand by and watch them evoke a demon. It was confusing, to say the least. In my agitation I stepped back a foot and bumped into something that clicked. I turned around, stared into the grinning visage of a dangling skeleton, and uttered my familiar "Ulp!"

I got my voice back at once. "Now look here—are you really serious about all this?"

Keith took a sheaf of papers from his pocket and placed them on a table near an inverted crucifix bearing the impaled body of a dried bat, hanging head downwards. He produced a fountain pen, waved me over.

"Sign," he ordered.

"Sign what?"

"The contract. Calling for your services as eye-witness for three months. Ten thousand dollars. Five now, five at the conclusion of our experiments. Serious enough for you?"

"Very." My fingers trembled as I scribbled a signature on both sets of contracts. They fairly shook with palsy as Professor Keith extended his check. Five thousand dollars right now! It was quite serious, no doubt about that.

"Well, then." Keith pocketed the papers. "Are we all ready to proceed, Lily?"

"Everything is in order, Professor," said the girl.

"Then draw the Pentagram," purred Keith. "You'll find the blood in the refrigerator still fresh enough. Recite the chant and light the fires, my dear. And don't worry—I'll keep you covered with the revolvers. If anything goes wrong I'll shoot to kill."

With a bland smile, Phillips Keith drew two guns from his vest holster and leveled them into the darkness of the curtained room.

2. Up Pops—

"SILVER bullets in here," explained Professor Keith. "Very good against vampires, werewolves, vrykolas, or ghouls. Don't know how effective they are against a draconibus, though."

"What?"

"A draconibus. Flying cacodemon of the night. Sort of an incubus. If Abbot Richalmus is correct. We're using his spell from *"Liber Revelationum de Insidia et Versutiis Daemonum Adversus Homines."* He says the things are black and scaly, quite human in appearance except for the wings and fangs, but on a low order of intelligence. Something like the elementals. If the bullets don't work, there's always the Pentagram. You know what it is; a five-pointed star, two angles ascendant and one pointed down. It represents Satan, Goat of the Sabbath."

"Are you crazy?" I had to say it.

"See here." Keith's face was stern in the red glare. "We might as well understand each other once and for all. I don't mind your skepticism in the least, but please don't cast doubts on my sanity or sincerity."

"But it all seems too absurd—mingling science and sorcery."

"Why?" Keith snapped. "Yesterday's magic is today's scientific fact. Voodoo witch doctors and medieval savants tried to cast out demons. Today psychiatrists attempt to cure insanity by hypnosis, suggestion, and shock treatments, in almost the same way.

"Once alchemists attempted to transmute base metals into gold. Today that effort constitutes the basis of scientific research along identical lines.

"Are not scientists attempting to find the Elixir of Youth in their laboratories, using

animal and human blood in their experiments like the mages of old?

"Don't scientists concern themselves with the vital problems of Life and Death—and keep chicken hearts and dog heads alive when severed from the dead bodies?

"Men died for that at the stake in ages past. They died for dealing with the very mysteries we scientists now openly attempt to probe. Science is sorcery, I tell you—except that in some cases, the ancient wizards might have been more *successful.*"

"You mean that you believe thaumaturgists once actually did revive the dead and call upon elementals?"

"I mean they tried to do it and may well have succeeded. I mean there was nothing wrong with their theories, but their methods were at fault. And I mean that modern science can take those same theories, apply the proper methods, and meet with complete success. That's what we're going to do."

"But—"

"Watch."

I watched. The slim figure of Lily Ross weaved a white pattern across the far side of the black chamber. Flame blossomed in her fingers as she bent over the braziers in the niches and re-kindled their dying fires. From a pouch at her waist she scattered fine dust upon the embers.

The fires flared upward—not red now, but green and blue and purple. A kaleidoscope of diabolic luminance flooded the vast room.

Red tongues rose from candle tips and lapped at the darkness. Thick, bloated candles, like the puffy fingers of a gigantically swollen corpse—thick, bloated candles, fed by a slim white priestess.

White witch!

SHE stooped over and drew a silvery design upon the floor, and its five luminous points were bathed with a crimson fluid poured from a canister.

"Blood," whispered Keith. "Type B blood."

"Type B?"

"Naturally. Didn't I tell you we were using modern scientific methods in witchcraft?

"Let's get down to cases. Sorcery in the Middle Ages was almost a racket. The average goetist was a charlatan. Some wizards hung around the courts of small nobles or petty princes, dabbling in astrology and palmistry, and fawning on their patrons like court jesters. They were arrant fakes.

"Others were like modern confidence men, forever asking money to perfect wild plans of transmuting lead to gold, completing an Elizir of Youth, or finding the Philosopher's stone. Just grafters.

"A third class were quack doctors—boys who took little shops in the side streets and sold phony love philtres, promised to put curses on enemies for a small fee, and attempted to cure everything from epilepsy to the French disease.

"Mixed in with these impostors were the psycopathic cases. Demonomaniacs and diaboleptics who pranced naked on the hilltops during Walpurgis Eve, claimed to ride broomsticks to the moon, or converse with the dead, and have infernal lovers. Inverted religious mania.

"But always there were serious students of the mantic arts. From their records—their spells and incantations—we are working here."

Keith pointed toward the bookshelves. "It took me years to gather this collection. Manuscripts, parchments, fragments from treatises, secret documents from every country and every age. Much of it is locked away in those files. In cunabula. Cost a small fortune, but worth it."

"But aren't they filled with the same fake gibberish as all the rest?" I objected. "I've read some of that stuff, and it's usually pretty silly."

"True. But there are kernels of truth. It's easy to discern. Some of the spells are known frauds; others are genuine."

"You mean if you read a spell aloud that it might conjure up a ghoul or a ghost?"

"If you read it *correctly,*" answered Keith. "There's the whole point. That's where science steps in.

"In many cases the spell has not been set down completely, due to fear. In other instances, the incantation has certain word changes, due to imperfect translations, or incorrect interpretation of the medieval Latin or Greek. The Church burned as much of the genuine stuff as could be found over centuries of time. We've had to spend months of preparation—weeding the genuine from the spurious, piecing together fragments, studying contemporary sources. It's been a lengthy job for Doctor Ross and myself, but we're now assured of one thing—we have on hand nearly one hundred actual, authentic incantations for the evocation of supernatural forces. If spoken correctly, the proper vibrations will be set up as in ordinary prayer, and responses will be made.

"Also, some of these incantations require ceremonies, such as this one. We've spent a goodly sum acquiring the necessary instruments and materials for our experiments. It's hard to buy a Hand of Glory, or baboon's blood; hard to secure enough cadavers. Grisly, too—but important."

I shrugged. "But Class B blood?"

"Merely an illustration of our thoroughness. We're going to attack the supernatural with modern aid. Consider the reasons for the failure of ancient sorcerers.

"For one thing, as I pointed out, many were admitted fakes. And serious students often got hold of the wrong translations, as I have demonstrated. Naturally, they didn't succeed.

"Again, they were balked by lack of proper materials. If the spell called for baboon's blood, they might have had to use the blood of a rhesus monkey, for example. It spoiled the mixture, by simple chemistry. We're experimenting, when we use human blood, with all blood types—because it might well be that a spell only works with a specific chemical compound. That's something the ancients didn't know.

"Similarly, they often were taken in by frauds. Perhaps they attempted brewing a philtre calling for 'powdered unicorn's horn.' Naturally, when *we* see such a recipe, we know it's a fake and throw it out. They weren't so fortunate, and again they failed.

"So there you are. It may look like hocus-pocus to you, but it's the result of applied scientific reasoning. We've sifted our spells, we've checked our formulae, we've gathered together only the most authentic ingredients, we're working by trial and error and modern logic.

"Under such conditions we cannot fail, if there is any truth in the supernatural lore which has dominated all nations and all religion since the dawn of Time.

"SURELY there is a basis of truth underlying this tremendous mass of legend and theory that is older than any other form of worship. Science has recognized today the pathological existence of the vampire and werewolf and ghoul in mental cases. Science has recognized today many practises which were once called witchcraft. Now we shall take the further step and discover whether the ancients were wiser than we knew. We shall reconstruct—correctly—the enchantments of the magicians and evocators.

"Today, using Class B blood, we are performing the Richalmus rune to evoke a draconibus. Doctor Ross has drawn the Pentagram. She has placed the five candles at the points, and fed the fires with the Three Colors.

"Now she will read the invocation in

the original Latin. If the conditions are reproduced correctly, we shall soon see the veritable flying daemon of the night which the good Abbot describes so graphically. Mayhap we shall capture it and offer our living proof to the world."

"You'll *capture* it?" I murmured.

Keith smiled. "Why not? That's the kind of evidence we need to confound the smug skeptics, the pompous figures who delight in shaming poor old women at seances and ridiculing sincere students of the occult. Why, when Tom Considine put up the money for all this, he laughed at me! I wonder what he'd say if I sent a draconibus into the office in a packing-case."

Keith chuckled as he pointed at the ceiling.

"Of course, if the thing does appear, and is dangerous, I've got the silver bullets to stop it. But I'd much prefer to take my apparitions alive. There's the scientific means."

I followed his directing finger. Suspended by chains in the shadowy heights above was a square sheet of transparent glass.

It hung directly over the spot where the Pentagram gleamed upon the floor.

"Notice the lever at the door," Keith said. "Turn that, and the glass cage drops down. Fits over whatever appears in the circle, fits like a cage."

"But your demon would surely break out of it at once," I said, half-ashamed at even using the word.

"Not from that," Keith assured me. "There are repelling crosses ground into the glass itself—including the crux ansantor. Tubes of holy water in the paneling along the sides. Besides, it's the modern 'unbreakable' glass, for added precaution, and there's a little tubing at the top which extends inside. It admits air—and it can also admit enough monoxide to turn that glass cage into a lethal chamber within thirty seconds. So if anything appears, just you pull that lever."

So there it was. I stood in the dark chamber as the white witch wove her spell, and heard the wizard instruct me on the fine art of demon-catching. If it hadn't been for that five thousand dollar check in my pocket, I'd have quit there.

Not because it was silly.

Because it was serious. Too serious. Keith had spoken wildly, but he had spoken with conviction. He was Professor Phillips Keith, associate director of a recognized scientific institute. He was a known scholar and savant, not a crackpot eccentric.

Lily Ross was nobody's fool, I felt—and she wasn't giggling behind her hand, either. She was going about her preparations like a trained scientific assistant. *Or a witch.*

Witchcraft! The Black Arts of legend, the hideous whisperings creeping throughout history and leering madly through all barriers of reasons. Satanism, the Black Mass, trafficking with the dead and the masters of the dead.

Here in this room, the reek of the grave. The corpse-fat candles, and the flames that burned with a blue light, a green lividity, a purple pallor. Blood trickling across an ancient symbol on the floor. Silence and darkness, and now a rustling, a Lily Ross took the yellow parchment in her hand and stepped toward the light of the blue brazier.

She stood there, poised and statuesque, a blond handmaiden of Evil. Her oval face was dedicated to darkness as her red lips shaped the first syllables that broke the utter silence.

Keith's face was pudgy and prosaic in the glare, but his eyes shone with the fanatic zeal of a Puritan warlock.

Sweat beaded my forehead.

"Would you go to hell for ten thousand dollars?"

Here, in this skyscraper tower, I was nearer to hell than I would be in the bowels of the earth.

Here stood the magic circle, the witch, the wizard. Here was the source, the linkage between Man and Mystery.

Lily Ross spoke the first sentences of the incantation.

I thought that her mouth was a scarlet flower, emanating corruption. I thought that her lips were heaven, but her voice was hell. I saw a beautiful young girl, and I heard the withered croaking of a crone.

It can't be explained. There was nothing wrong with her *tone*. It was what she *said*.

The words were Latin, but they didn't seem to be words as much as sounds, and not so much sounds as *vibrations*.

Not college Latin. Not words with meaning in themselves. Not words spoken as sentences. Just sounds, constructed for a purpose. An evil purpose.

I knew that. I knew it as strongly as I knew my own existence.

Lily Ross was reciting an incantation, and for the first time I realized what an incantation meant.

It was a call to a demon.

It was the use of human tongue in a peculiar way, to set up certain vibrations, certain forces that touched, or impinged upon, other worlds. Sound-waves, reaching across planes and angles of existence, commanding and guiding. Sound-waves shatter glasses in modern laboratories. Sound-waves shatter buildings, if properly pitched in volume and intensity. And sound-waves, over and above radio frequency vibrations, can pluck the harps that sound in hell. Can knock upon the gates of the Pit and call forth Presences.

Her voice was but an instrument. The meaningless drone was rising, almost uncontrollably.

Now I knew what truth there was in the power of the word. The word used in prayer, and the word used in black summons.

The drone blended with the blackness. The blackness mingled oddly with the green, the violet, the blue fires.

The Pentagram became a wriggling, phosphorescent serpent, swaying amidst green, purple, and blue words of flame. The shadows droned. The girl burned and flickered.

Suddenly the pulsing began.

It shook the walls. It rose with the words the girl recited, blended with them, then emerged stronger, triumphant. Smoke spiralled up in a sudden jet from the braziers, as a great wind filled the chamber.

I shook before the icy blast that was not air—shook as though a dental drill buzzed through my nerves.

I looked through water at a shimmering, slim figure, a slithering silver line on the floor, a wiggling spiral of colored fires. And then the light came up, the roar came up, the voice came up to a single, sustained note.

"Wake up!"

"Somebody was shaking me. It was Keith. Slowly the roaring died away.

"You're out on your feet, man!"

I looked around. There was no shimmering. No wind. No noise. Lily Ross —a girl, not a witch—stood silent and dejected.

Keith scowled at me. "We've failed."

"But I felt something—something—"

"Pure self-hypnosis. It didn't work."

Lily Ross stepped over.

"Let me see this copy of the incantation," Keith demanded, wearily. He took the paper from her hand.

"Damnation!"

Lily's eyes widened to a deeper blue. "What's the matter?"

"Matter? Here's a perfect example of what I was trying to explain. You've made a mistake here. This isn't the proper invocation at all. This isn't the Richalmus

ritual. It's that other one almost like it—Gorgioso's Invocation of the Devil!"

"How did that happen?" asked the girl. "I could have sworn—"

"I'll do the swearing," snapped Keith. "You've recited the Invocation of the Devil by mistake. No wonder nothing happened!"

He turned to me, but didn't say anything. There was no chance to speak.

For the roaring started again, and this time there was no question of self-hypnosis involved.

The rumbling shook the room as though the building was clawed by an earthquake. Lily and Professor Keith stood swaying beside me as the wind rose, the flame flared, the thunderous crescendo swept through our bodies, tore at our brains.

Gleaming with lambent fire, the Pentagram writhed at our feet. Within it a black shadow—a black shadow, coalescing, blurring into an outline—an outline in the Pentagram of Satan, Black Goat of the Sabbath!

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Lily Ross's trembling hands move out, saw the crumpled scrap of paper fall from her fingers. It was the parchment from which she had read the incantation—the *wrong* incantation. The one that summoned up the Devil.

And now—a figure stood in the Pentagram!

3. Speaks of the Devil

WE STARED, all of us. Lily Ross gave a tiny gasp, lost amidst the crackling of the braziers. Keith was numb. I found myself trembling, unable to lift my hands and shield my eyes from a vision that seared and burned with a flame from the Pit.

The Presence crouched there in the Pentagram, its black goat-face gleaming in the glare of the fires. The shaggy, tousled head with the stumps of goat-horns, the fiendishly familiar visage, the cloaked body—I saw them all, merging into a sharper focus of actuality.

The Presence *gathered* itself as I gazed, as though revelling in the actuality of its new physical existence. Like a child being born and *realizing* it.

But this was no child. There was nothing youthful in the ancient smirk of relish on that ageless face. The fires in those slitted eyes burned long before the gases which created Earth.

It was a tableau born in a daemonic dream. And like a dream, it dissolved into sudden, terrible action.

The goat-body moved, black arms extended. Claws, talons, call them what you will, emerged swiftly from the cloak. They reached across the Pentagram.

One foot moved out. Black, misshapen. Hooflike. *Cloven!*

My own feet moved then. Moved in desperate swiftness. As the Presence lumbered forward I raced for the doorway. My outstretched arms tugged frantically at the lever Keith had shown me. I wrenched it down.

From the ceiling the iron chains grated. There was a thunderous crash, and then the great glass cage dropped down squarely over the black body of Satan, Prince of Darkness.

The creature in the cage beat black claws against the glass and suddenly recoiled.

"Good Lord!" These, the first words spoken, were Keith's contribution. They sounded most appropriate.

I began to laugh. I couldn't help it.

"What's that for?" Lily Ross whispered.

"I was just thinking," I gasped weakly. "I've—I've matched wits against Satan himself, the Arch-Enemy. And won!"

Lily calmly reached out with one slim hand and slapped my face. Hard.

I sobered. "Thanks," I whispered. "I couldn't control it."

"No hysteria," she said. "If you'd kept that up one minute more, I'd have started to scream myself. It's too much—we've got Satan locked up in a skyscraper!"

"Are you still skeptical?" Keith asked.

"Skeptics don't sweat," I answered, dabbing my forehead. "But if I'm not skeptical, I'm practical. What do we do now?"

"Turn on the lights, for one thing." Keith pressed the rheostat. The room blazed up into prosaic outline. Fluorescence turned the darkness to daylight, and we stood in the draped chamber—ordinary figures once more, in an ordinary room.

Except for that glass cage, and the horror it held.

It was bad enough in the firelight, but now the nightmare quality of our captive was accentuated ten-fold.

The black figure stood proudly in the center of the glass enclosure—stood proud as Lucifer. Unbidden, the three of us drew closer.

Under the lights I saw every detail. Too much detail. The monster was shaggy, a goat-headed Aegypan figure with human eyes and mouth. The skin was jet-black, but dull. I stared intently at one gnarled talon—horrified at its microscopic detail and the total absence of visible pores in the skin.

Lily's blue eyes, Keith's gray ones, followed mine.

"It's incredible," muttered the pudgy professor. "Just like the mental image I'd formed. "The beard, the mustache, the monocle. And the red skin."

"*Red* skin?" I snapped. "It's black!"

"Scaly!" insisted Lily.

"No scales," I said. "What are you talking about? And what do you mean, monocle? Why, he's like a black goat."

"Are you crazy?" Keith said. "Why anyone can see that he's a man in evening dress with a red face and a monocle."

"What about that forked tail?" asked Lily. "That's the worst."

"No tail at all," I retorted. "You two aren't seeing straight."

Keith stepped back.

"Wait a minute," he protested. "Let's consider this." He cocked his head my way. "You claim you see a sort of black goat, with human features, wearing a cloak?"

I NODDED.

"And you, Lily?"

"A scaly creature with a forked tail. More like a gray lizard."

"And I see a red fiend in evening dress," Keith announced. "Well, we're all correct."

"I don't get it."

"Don't you understand? No one really knows what the Devil looks like. Each of us has his own mental picture, drawn from imaginative illustrations in books. Throughout known history, Satan has been pictured in several ways by his worshipers and enemies. To some he appeared as the Goat of the Sabbath, the primitive fiend of the oriental nomads, the Father of Lies known to the Bible.

"To others he is essentially the incarnation of the Tempter, the Serpent. To moderns, he is the red gentleman. We three each visualize him in our own way, and the focal thought of millions throughout the ages materializes him in whichever aspect seems most natural to the beholder.

"We're all looking at the same figure. We all see different concepts. What he really looks like, we cannot say. He may be gas, or light, or simply a flame. But our thoughts give him the material body."

"You may be right," Lily hazarded.

"Why not? I don't want to blaspheme, but does anyone know what Christ really looked like? No—all we have to go by is the standard concept, which was invented by medieval painters. And yet, He is always pictured in one way, and we have come to think of Him in that way. We

couldn't see Him in any other form. So it is with the Enemy."

"That's all very interesting," I interrupted. "But what do we do now—phone for the papers?"

"Are you joking? Do you know what would happen if the world learned that we had—him captive in this room? Can't you see the panic, the madness that would be loosed on earth?

"Besides, we must experiment. Yes, this is our opportunity. Povidence must have guided us when we made that mistake!"

"Are you sure it was Providence?" asked Lily, quietly. "This gift did not come from Heaven."

"Don't quibble. My girl, just realize what we have here in our midst! Why, it's the greatest thing that's happened since—"

"The capture of Gargantua, the gorilla," I finished for him. But I didn't smile when I said it. "Keith, this is dangerous. I don't like it. We've apparently got our visitor bottled up under glass, but if he ever gets loose—"

"He won't get loose," Keith barked. "Are you a coward, man? Can't you see that here, in this very room, we hold a proof of witchcraft, a proof of the existence of the supernatural, of evil?"

"I agree with you about evil," I answered. "And I'm afraid. He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon."

"You talk like—"

"A priest," I finished again. "And perhaps they are wiser than you scientists think. They have been fighting this creature here for long centuries, and their wisdom should be heeded."

"Why, you said yourself that you matched wits with the Devil and beat him," Keith protested. "We, with the weapons of scientific research at our command, are going to study our guest. Why, we'll give him a blood test, we'll examine the skin, we'll isolate cells under the microscope, we'll use X-ray, we'll—"

I turned away. It was madness. I sought sanity in Lily Ross's blue eyes. But she was babbling too. The scientific spirit.

"Maybe the creature can speak. What about an intelligence test? We'll get our dope from the staff. Take pictures."

"You'd think it was some new sort of guinea-pig. But I didn't. Not when I saw the black body crouching there, huddled up away from the cross-etched glass, but with flaming evil in its eyes. They had the Devil in a cage, and they wanted his fingerprints!

"Success!" Keith trumpeted. "Success beyond the wildest dreams of man. We'll conduct a scientific study of all evil—of incarnate evil. The nature and principle of evil. The evil men have known of, feared throughout the ages since Creation. It's there. We all see it differently through our own eyes. All men do, but it exists. Like electricity. A force."

He stood beside the glass enclosure, gesturing like a circus barker.

"Behold the Great God Pan! Yes, and behold the Serpent, the Tempter, the Fallen Angel! Behold Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Azriel, Asmodeus, Sammael, Zamiel, Prince of Darkness and Father of Lies! Gaze on the Black Goat of the Sabbath, gaze on fabled Ahriman, on Set, Typhon, Malik Tawis, Abaddon, Yama, Primal Nodens, the archetype of evil, known to all men by all names!"

Once again I felt the urge of hysterical laughter. This was too much. Only the girl saved me.

"Let's get out of here," she suggested. "At once. We've had a shock. Tomorrow we can sit down and reason this thing out clearly, if we're not crazy already. We can make plans sensibly then. Let's rest."

"You're right. I'm sure that—he—

will be safe behind the glass. And this room is locked, sealed. No one must suspect."

Keith moved toward the door and we followed. He snapped out the light as the door opened, plunged the room into Stygian night.

We went out. I looked back once. There was nothing but blackness, and two red coals burning. Eyes. Eyes in the darkness. The eyes of Satan. The eyes that saw Faust.

4. Hell Breaks Loose

"SO THAT'S my story," I concluded. "Now, what's yours?"

Lily Ross raised her glass, tinkling the ice in rhythm to the music from the orchestra.

"Just a little astro-physics and bio-chemistry," she smiled. "A job at Rocklynn as Keith's assistant."

"Don't kid me. You're a blonde in a green evening dress, the prettiest come-on girl in this supper club. And you're going to dance with me, because you never heard of chemistry or physics, but you can La Conga all night."

She could, too. One whirl around the floor convinced me. Clinched me, in fact. That noise like a ton of bricks was me falling. But I didn't care. I had the Devil by the tail and Lily Ross in my arms, and I was sitting on top of the world tonight.

But when we got back to our table, Lily sobered for a moment.

"I say," she said. "I'm worried about Professor Keith. That excitement today, our experiment, unnerved him. Hope he's going to be all right tomorrow. He went home in a taxi and went to bed."

"Calm yourself, Lily," I said. "If he isn't all right tomorrow, he'll merely be suffering from a hangover."

"What do you mean?"

"Take a squint at that table near the orchestra," I grinned. "If Keith got in a taxi he wasn't going home."

Lily took her squint, and then her eyes went wide. "Why, he's here—and he's with a woman!"

"That's putting it mildly," I told her. "He's got a woman and a half there. It's Eve Vernon, the singer in *On the Beam*. Never thought he was such a man-about-town."

"He isn't!" Lily gasped. "Why, he never goes anywhere at all. I've never heard of him escorting a woman. And that's champagne on his table, too. Why—"

"Live and learn," I said. "He's just relaxing, that's all. Shall we join him?"

"Certainly not. It might embarrass him. Besides, there's something strange about this—"

I shrugged, but subsequent events bore me out. Keith was relaxing to a point where it was necessary to bear him out. He danced. He drank two quarts of champagne, solo. He laughed. He reddened. He tried to dance with the girls in the floor show. When Lily and I slipped out he was singing drunkenly at the top of his lungs, to the delight of the surrounding tables.

"Disgusting," Lily commented.

"Forget it," I advised.

I forgot it in her good-night kiss. I forgot everything. All I knew was that tomorrow, at ten o'clock, she would be waiting down at Rocklynn.

She was. I entered the outer lobby and took her arm.

"Where's the Professor?" I asked.

"He didn't show up."

"He *must* have a hangover, then! Did you call him?"

"Certainly. His housekeeper says he hasn't been in all night."

"Strange. What shall we do?"

"Let's go into the laboratory and wait. We must inspect our—specimen."

Lily led the way down the hall, to the barred doorway. She fumbled with a key.

"Why—it's open!"

We entered.

The room was dark, and only a single brazier burned. A single brazier, and the red eyes in the glass cage.

A figure huddled before the cage.

"Keith!"

I shook him. He struggled to his feet.

"Oh—I must have dozed off. Been here almost all night. Watching to see what he would do—"

Keith's face was haggard, his clothing rumpled. He spoke thickly, as though half-asleep.

"Better get home and get some rest," Lily suggested. "We'll stay here. If you feel up to it this afternoon, we can make our plans then."

SUDDENLY the Professor drew himself up. He seemed to visibly shake off his fatigue.

"Nonsense! I'm all right. Feel splendid, perfectly splendid. But no time for a conference, my dear. I've got to find Considine. Need more money from him, at once.

"Got a great idea, a great idea. Tell you all about it. Must find Considine, though. You stay here, keep your eyes open. See you tonight at the Test Tube Ball. I'll arrange to meet Considine there, and some of his friends."

He was gone. Lily's mouth was a red oval of astonishment.

"Test Tube Ball?" I repeated.

"Yes. Society masquerade. Patrons of Rocklynn Institute hold it every year. Collect funds there, you know. But what does Keith want at such a gathering? He never dances or goes in for social affairs."

"You forget last night."

"That's just the point—I can't forget last night. That Professor isn't well, I'm sure of it. Something has happened."

"He isn't the only one who isn't well," I said softly. "Look into the glass."

Lily turned and we surveyed the cage together.

Satan squatted, half-slumping, on the floor. The red eyes flickered, but they were suddenly fainter in their fire.

"Sick?" Lily murmured.

"No air—or no food. What does His Majesty eat?" I began. But something about the aspect of the creature cut me short.

"I wish Keith were here," said Lily. "We ought to do something."

We peered into the glass.

Suddenly Satan opened his eyes. He sat up and stared back. All at once he rose to his feet, stepped forward. His upraised claws almost touched the glass, but not quite. The gesture was one of appeal. And in those eyes I read not hate, but—recognition!

Lips curled, disclosing yellowed fangs. They moved silently behind the glass.

"He's trying to talk to us!" Lily gasped. "I'm sure of it!"

"Watch!"

The black fiend was gesturing wildly. Its eyes rested first on Lily's face and then my own.

"If we could only find out—"

"No use."

Evidently it was true. His Unholiness suddenly slumped to rest once again on the floor, head buried in the long black arms.

We stared at one another for a long moment.

Once more there was activity within the cage. The creature had bent down on its knees over the floor. One claw held a tiny sliver. With a start, I recognized it. It was chalk—the phosphorescent stuff used to draw the Pentagram with. And the Devil was writing!

From time to time eyes rested on our faces in a strange appeal. The bony fingers

continued to move: slowly, painfully.

Letters traced upon the floor. Words. Sentences. And then it was done.

"Turn out the flame of the brazier," Lily whispered. "Then we can read it."

I clicked it off, plunged the room into utter darkness. I advanced through that darkness to her side, stared into the dim glow on the floor. A glow that brightened.

Letters. Letters of fire. Silver fire on the floor. I read the words.

"Quickly! Stop him before it's too late. He got into me this morning and I know what he means to do."

That's when I gasped.

I gasped again at the sight of the two words beneath the message. They were a signature.

"*Phillips Keith,*" I read. Letters of silver fire in my brain.

Lily was shaking at my side. I pulled her to her feet.

"Come on," I said.

"Where?"

"After the Professor, of course. We're going to the Test Tube Ball."

5. The Devil Dances

THE Lone Ranger never had a mission like mine. Nor a costume like mine, either. Lily's hunting outfit was more appropriate. We were out to get our man—if man he was.

There was no dancing in mind for us tonight. Not if what we suspected were true. It might have been cunning on the thing's part—the cunning of a fiend. But anything was possible in a world gone mad. We had the Devil in a cage. Who in this room would believe that? Yet it was true. And these dancing, babbling digits of the Four Hundred hadn't the faintest suspicion.

I smiled grimly at the thought. Suppose His Hellishness should walk suddenly into this very ballroom?

I imagined the screaming, the dismay, the horror. They'd dance to a different tune if *that* happened!

But—*it did.*

Lily and I stood by the door waiting. We'd been there for ten minutes, ever since our arrival, eyes scanning the dancers for a glimpse of Keith. He was on his way, the housekeeper had said, when our frantic call had come through. He should be here now, any minute. So we stood there, and Satan walked in.

It was Keith, of course, in a Mephistocles disguise. Red suit, false beard and mustache. But he'd added a grisly touch. Red chalk on face and hands. *His* concept of Satan.

I HAD never realized he was so tall. Tall and slender. He looked the part, looked it too well.

We weren't the only ones to notice it. The orchestra had just finished a number, and the crowded hall was a perfect setting for his entrance. He came down three stairs, and all at once the conversation seemed to die away. Women stopped talking in mid-screech, and the fat paws of business men tightened about their cigars in astonishment as Phillips Keith walked into the room.

My mind shuttled back in memory to a similar scene. Red Death! That was it—Lon Chaney as Red Death in *The Phantom of the Opera!* It terrified me as a child, and now my spine tingled anew. Phillips Keith as Satan, Master of Evil.

"What a disguise!"

"Perfect!"

"Even the club foot!"

I could have choked the thin matron who said that. She would have to call *that* to my attention. The tingling in my spine became a pulsation of dread.

For Phillips Keith limped.

"Dropped something on his foot," Lily whispered. "He must have—"

Club foot. Or cloven hoof?

The red figure of Mephistocles stalked through the parted lane. Proudly he walked, despite the limp. Proud as Lucifer.

I saw him beckon to a stout man in pirate costume.

"Considine," said Lily, dully. "That's Thomas Considine."

Keith said a few words. Considine appeared to be laughing, commenting on the disguise. He walked at the Professor's side, then beckoned to a companion. The party moved toward a side door.

At that moment the orchestra struck up. Dancing started once more, conversation rose suddenly, and the red-clad Mephisto and his two companions disappeared from the floor.

I grabbed Lily's wrist and jostled through the crowd.

"Hurry," I commanded. "Something's up!"

WE REACHED the door just as the red cloak whisked into the elevator. The door closed, the car moved down.

"Stairs!"

Three flights down in nothing, flat. The red cloak flicked tantalizingly out of the lobby.

We reached the street just as the black car rolled away.

Heaven sent a taxi around the corner.

I pushed Lily inside, to nurse her black and blue wrist.

"Follow that car—" I began. Then, "To blazes with that! Just take us to Rocklynn Foundation. I know where they're going."

Lily knew, too. We didn't say anything, just stared at each other, and I'm afraid my eyes were as frightened as hers.

Hurtling down the black, gaping mouths of midnight streets, riding the wind behind the red cloak of Satan—this wasn't New York, but ancient Prague.

Then, climbing the dark tower of the skyscraper, up toward the hidden chamber —this wasn't the twentieth century, but a scene set in medieval nightmare.

As we paused before the door marked *Private,* we heard a voice. It too was filtered through a black dream. Keith's voice —partly.

I don't like to admit that it was only *partly* Keith's voice, but what else can one say? It was a voice coming from his throat, using his larynx, but there was a deep, burring overtone that was altogether unnatural in any human throat.

It might have been imagination. As we stood before that door, I hoped it was imagination.

Maybe Keith had a cold. That's why he sounded that way. But cold or no cold, I couldn't help hearing what he *said.* That was by far the worst of all.

Whispering huskily from that black room—

"So now you see what I have accomplished, gentlemen. You, Considine, and you, Mr. Wintergreen, can no longer doubt the evidence of your own senses."

"But it's monstrous!" Considine boomed. "The Devil in a cage!"

"Monstrous, you say? Glorious! Don't you see the possibilities here?"

"I suppose it's all very interesting scientifically, but what do you intend to do—exhibit this creature to the public or something of the sort?"

Keith laughed. Or rather, that voice laughed.

"Considine, you talk like a fool. Can't you realize we have something here that can become the most powerful force on earth?"

"Powerful?" interrupted the nasal tones of Wintergreen.

"Yes, all-powerful. Consider, gentlemen, for a moment, what our captive can

mean to us. Have you ever heard of the Black Mass, of the worship of Satan?

"For centuries men have gathered to pay homage to the Devil. Believing that the Kingdom of Heaven is ruled by God, they claim that earth is ruled by Satan, and choose to worship him. If he grants them happiness here on earth, they are willing to forsake celestial joys."

"What utter rot!"

THE voice droned on, contemptuous of the interruption. "They meet in hidden places—the cellars of ancient houses or ruined churches—on Walpurgis Eve and other unhallowed nights. Candles, fashioned from the corpse-fat of unbaptized infants, light their devotions to the Prince of Darkness. An unfrocked priest presides over the altar; the altar which is the naked, living flesh of a woman. All boast of their sins, and confess penitently their good deeds.

"Then, as the Lord's Prayer is recited in reverse, a parody of the Mass is held. The Mass of St. Secaire, the unholy ritual of Gilles de Retz and the Marquis de Sade. A sacrifice is given to Satan, and celebrants drink of a red wine which is truly human blood. All do homage to the Father of Evil, who grants them then their dark desires."

"Don't talk like that," Wintergreen begged, in nervous protest. "We're not children, to be frightened by bogey-men."

"Neither are the thousands of secret Satanists who carry on these rites. They believe. Many of them are the victims of charlatans, frauds who prey on the neurotic rich.

"And I'm not offering you a bogey-man. I'm offering you the actual physical entity of the Fallen Angel, the Master of the Great Black Lodge.

"That's why I brought you here and showed you our captive. Your money enabled me to summon him. It is only fitting now that you be given the opportunity to profit thereby."

The droning voice held cunning. Devilish cunning. Lily grasped my wrist, but I shrugged her into silence again as we crouched, listening.

"We have here the opportunity for power. For undreamt of wealth. We, and we alone, are the masters of Satan. Let me tell you my plan.

"I shall become the High Priest of the Satanists. You, Considine, and you, Wintergreen, shall go out among your friends and proselyte. Bring the rich old women, the eccentric old men into the fold. Bring them to the Black Mass, spread the word that a new day is at hand for those who would pay the price to the Powers of Darkness. Tell them that there are ways to obtain eternal youth, ways to obtain more wealth, ways to wreak revenge.

"Can't you see? We'll build an empire out of what was once only an old wive's tale! We can control nations, master the earth!"

"Have you gone crazy, Keith?" Considine's deep voice trembled. "Are you utterly mad? First you show up in a Mephisto costume, then you bring us to look at this freak, this animal hybrid of yours, and now you babble insanities."

"Yes," Wintergreen amended, weakly. "I'm getting out of here."

"No you don't. You know the secret, and it's too much. Neither of you leaves this room until you've agreed."

I don't know what I intended to do. I only realized that there would never be a better cue for my entrance.

I flung the door open and marched in, Lily Ross at my side.

Considine and Wintergreen stared with open mouths. In the glass cage beyond, the black figure gestured frantically in the red glow of the braziers.

I ignored them all. I had eyes only for Keith—for the man in the red cloak, the

man with the red face and the spade beard.

As he turned to face me, I read his eyes, read the blazing message there. His hands swooped up, claw-like, as I charged.

Sheer instinct drove me on; the same instinct that guides a man to crush a wriggling serpent, even though he knows it is about to strike.

Lily screamed as my hands closed about Keith's scarlet throat, rose to rake his face. I almost screamed as I felt that face.

I was tearing at his disguise, at his false beard. Tearing and tearing — and it wouldn't come off.

For Professor Phillips Keith was *not* disguised at all. He was Satan in red flesh!

The dragging club-foot, the cloven hoof moved up, butting my thighs. The claws razored my chest. The deep growling from the creature's throat welled horribly. I punched out at the fiendish visage, and my hands hammered against iron.

Considine and Wintergreen, Lily and the creature in the cage whirled crazily by. Red arms encircled me, and began to crush.

To crush and break. Pudgy little arms bent me back until I felt my spine bending like a white-hot wire of pain. Pudgy little arms—but they held strength. *The strength of a demon.*

Demon arms crushing. Demon breath searing my face. Demon face glaring into my own. My senses ebbed, and a chuckling rose from the grinning thing that crushed me like a rag-doll, crushed me down into darkness and a swirling mist of pain.

I tore my left hand free, somehow; got it up to my pocket. I wrenched the flask out, ripped the cork with frantic fingers. The creature grabbed for my arm, twisted it, but the flask was open. I jerked it up.

A white stream spurted against the red face. With a howl of agony, the thing's arms flew up to shield its head. Breaking free, I spattered more of the fluid on the head and shoulders. Rocking on its feet a moment, the creature staggered, fell to its knees. A hideous stench arose. Smoke seemed to pour from the redskin.

As the thing fell, I was upon it. I tore the hands from the ravaged face, for there was no strength in those red talons now. I jammed the flask up against the pain-contorted mouth, tilted it. The liquid gushed forth, gurgled down the crimson maw.

In a moment it was over. I rose and faced the three at my side. Lily sobbed.

"I—I thought it would kill you," she gasped. "Until you threw the acid in its face."

"Acid?" I echoed. "Acid, hell—*that was holy water!*"

6. *Getting Behind Satan*

"YES, the holy water did the trick." It was Professor Phillips Keith who spoke—spoke weakly, through ashen lips —but spoke, and in a voice unmistakably his own. Considine and Wintergreen knelt at his side, propping up his gray head.

It had taken ten minutes to bring him around. At first we had thought the red thing dead—and it was Lily who noticed the *change*, and pointed it out with a murmur of astonishment.

The redness of the skin faded out, slowly. The contours of the body altered subtly, almost before our eyes. It was like the Jekyll-Hyde transformation accomplished by a movie camera, but the reality was ghastly.

When we saw Professor Phillips Keith lying on the floor in an incongruous red cloak, when we saw his eyelids flutter weakly, some measure of composure returned. By the time the familiar, "What happened?" came faintly from his lips, we were prepared to answer. I told him the story.

"Yes, it was the holy water, all right,"

he repeated. "Pure inspiration on your part to think of it."

"Pure desperation," I corrected.

"I must have been pretty bad."

"You were—evil," Lily interjected slowly. "Utterly evil."

"But what does it all mean?" Considine asked.

"It means that I was possessed of the devil."

"Do you really believe—"

"You saw me," Keith continued. "It was a clear case of what the ancients called *demoniac possession*. From Bible times down, literature and history is filled with recorded instances of men and women who were 'possessed.' Such a condition overtook me.

"I don't know how it started. When we evoked that thing in the cage, I suppose. The shock of our success weakened my mental resistance. The barriers went down in a wave of enthusiasm. You remember my harangue before the glass, don't you?" Keith turned to me.

I nodded.

"That night I came back. I wanted another look at our captive. I got it—guess I got too much. The creature hypnotized me. I didn't know. I looked at it and I became *elated*. I felt exhilarated, half-intoxicated. What religious maniacs describe, and what the old priests of Pan used to call—*ecstasy*.

"That was it. You and Lily saw the effect it had on me. I went out that night, can't even remember how. Another will than my own seemed to command me, drive me. Working through my senses, the creature broke down my volition. Satan knows the flesh.

"After that night I came back. I came back at dawn, under a compulsion born of intoxication and the inner urge upon me. I came back to stare at the creature in the cage, stare at the red eyes in the darkness which glistened like two distant whirling worlds of evil. Two distant worlds that came closer, merged and blended with our own world, blended with my own brain. You and Lily found me asleep beside the cage this morning. The change had occurred.

"I don't remember much of today. It must have worked very fast. I have only two distinct memories—one, of looking into a mirror late this afternoon and seeing my skin assume a reddish tint, as though I had been deeply sunburned. The other memory is vaguer still. It concerns writing something with a piece of chalk in a dream."

I told Keith about our experience with the strangely cowed creature in the cage.

"Part of me must have entered into it when it took my body," he said gravely. His face clouded again in recollection. "My body! By nightfall it wasn't my body any more. The leg dragged. I seemed to know what was happening, but I didn't care. I had this ecstasy, this force, driving me. I went to the ball, and you know the rest."

There was silence. Somehow Considine's muttered "Incredible!" sounded mawkish and inappropriate.

"Professor, you should get some rest," said Lily. "The shock—I think it would be best if you spent a few days in the hospital until—"

A white hand waved.

"I can't, my dear. I can't. Don't you see? We have *him* to deal with."

The hand leveled toward the glass cage. Our eyes followed.

THE slumping figure behind the glass was gone. In its place once more was Satan, Lord of the Sabbath. Black, erect, and menacing, with the yellow, rotted fangs sneering in malignant fury. There was no mistaking the hate, the thwarted desire in those burning eyes. Considine and Wintergreen saw it for the first time. They

breathed through their mouths hoarsely.

Yes, Satan was back. Satan waited again, waited to spring.

"We thought we had him trapped, but you see—we haven't," Keith whispered. "He has found the way to get out. He can take possession of the human body and walk the earth as a man. For a day or so, anyway. Then the human body changes and the man becomes outwardly, as well as inwardly, the image of Evil. We must get rid of him once and for all. We must!"

"Take it easy," I said. "We understand."

"But you don't understand, you can't. Not until you've been through what I've been through. God!" Keith shuddered. "I'll never rest until we've found a way to send him back to Hell."

"You'll rest. Lily and I will get to work, I promise you." The girl nodded agreement.

"Send him back," Keith whispered. "You can't kill him, there is no way. Send him back before—"

The gray head slumped.

"He's passed out," Wintergreen said.

"Good! Phone for an ambulance. We'll carry him out to the lobby. Say it's collapse from overwork or something. Our word is good. He needs hospital attention."

We carried Keith out, carried the plan out.

Lily and I faced the two industrialists.

"Not a word of this now, to anyone," I cautioned. "We alone share the secret, and we alone must solve it. Keith was right. We must find a way to send this creature back."

"I still can't believe it," Wintergreen said. Considine scowled in perplexity.

"Neither do I, but I can feel it, all right. I don't pretend to understand all you've told me, but I know that you're right. It's a mistake to pry into these things. Send that thing back to wherever it came from, use any method you want, and charge the bill to me."

"You'll keep silence?" I reiterated.

"We will." Considine walked heavily toward the door. Suddenly the big man turned. His beefy face worked with unwonted emotion. "And may God help you in the task," he said softly.

The two went out. I faced Lily.

"There's a job to do," I said grimly. "Are you game?"

"You know I am."

"After what happened to Keith, I'm almost afraid to let you help," I murmured.

"You'll have to. I'm the only one who knows the formulae."

"We'll be playing with fire," I persisted.

"Hell fire," added the girl. "But we won't be burned."

7. Devil May Care

"ANY luck?" I asked dully.

"No," sighed the girl. She rose from the desk, one slim hand brushing back the golden cascade of her hair. "I'm afraid it's no use. There are no formulae here to get rid of him."

"But there has to be one," I insisted. "There must be a way to send him back."

"Not by incantation." Her hopeless glance met mine, melted. For a moment we stood together—then turned, by common impulse, to the glass cage in the center of the room.

Black, brooding, baleful, the Goat of the Sabbath crouched on the floor. The leering, beady eyes rested scornfully on our own. Yellowed fangs menaced in a derisive grin.

Lily shivered. "Can he hear us?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter. He knows. He's waiting, too."

"That's what I'm afraid of. Darling, we can't go on like this forever. It's been two days already. We can't keep on hid-

ing it always—and if anyone should suspect—"

"There must be a way out!" I scowled, my eyes restlessly searching the room.

"Wait a minute. I've got it!"

"What?"

"Didn't Professor Keith say something about tubing in the glass cage? Something about lethal gas?"

"You're right!" Lily's smile became animated. "That tank over there under the table—it's got the tubing attached. We just plug into the panel at the side, and the gas is released. Hand-pump. Come on, I'll show you."

We did the job. It wasn't easy to brave the ghoulish stare of the creature in the cage as my hands fumbled with the nozzle of the hose and screwed it into place.

It was easier to feel the reassuring firmness of the efficient hand-pump handle, once things were in readiness.

"I hope it works," Lily whispered.

"It must work. We have to kill this thing somehow," I answered. "Here goes."

I pumped.

There was a hissing, the inflated tube writhed like a serpent. I watched the nozzle in the panel.

A cloudy vapor poured into the glass enclosure.

I pumped harder, as the black figure vanished suddenly in a whirl of poisonous fog.

"It's working!" exclaimed the girl. "Keep it up—nothing can survive this stuff."

Billows of whitish smoke writhed in miniature Inferno behind the glass. Inferno for a demon.

The pump sighed emptily.

Together we advanced toward the clouded glass pane.

"See anything?" I asked.

"No. Not yet." Lily pressed her forehead against the glass of the cage, wrinkled it in straining scrutiny. "No—wait a minute. The smoke is clearing."

"Clearing? There's nowhere for it to go!"

"But it is!"

And it was. Even as we watched, the white vapor thinned into spirals, shreds, cumulae.

Behind it crouched the black, goatish body.

Crouched, not slumped.

Satan was alive! And yet the gases cleared—*because he was inhaling them!*

"Good Lord, he's absorbing the stuff into his system! He *breathes* poison!" I murmured.

Malignant, triumphant, the black goat pranced. Its eyes shone with evil merriment, with a sort of added animation.

"He thrives on the stuff," Lily sighed. "Now what?"

"Water," I said.

The details don't matter. We used the same tubing, and a new pump. Filled the glass enclosure to the brim. Enough water to drown anything inside.

He absorbed it, of course.

I was afraid to try an arc-welder.

"You can't kill the Devil with fire," Lily told me.

That was that. Bombs were out—anything was out which entailed the risk of releasing His Satanic Majesty.

We were back to where we started.

"Give me another day," Lily said. "I'll find an incantation. There must be something here. Some variant on a spell for casting out demons, perhaps. Just put a twist on it. We must get one."

"I must get some sleep," I added. And meant it. Devil-killing is hard work.

"Go home," commanded the girl.

"And leave you here alone with that? Not on your life! Remember what happened to Keith."

"Well, go into the private office down the hall and take a nap. There's a couch there. I'll keep on working."

"I don't know," I said, slowly.

"I'll be all right. I won't even look at our friend here. Besides, you know what Keith said. He was almost out on his feet, his mental barriers were down. I'm no pushover. Go ahead now, run along and get your rest. I'll promise to get out of here in an hour or so."

"Promise me that?"

"Of course, darling."

"And you won't look at him?"

"Not when I can look at you." She stood very close. I put my arms around her, held her. Over my shoulder the fiend grinned. But her smile warmed.

"All right. But I'm coming back within an hour. And if I catch you flirting with Old Nick here, you'll be sorry."

Abruptly I sobered. "You really think there's a chance of finding a way?"

"I do. We *must*. Now, off with you."

I left the room. Lily Ross sat down, ran her hands through her golden hair, and opened the black book on the desk. In the dancing light of the braziers she looked as she had when I first saw her—like a white witch.

She *was* a white witch in my dreams.

8. Hell Hath No Fury—

SHE was only a girl when she awakened me.

I grinned sheepishly through a shroud of sleep. "Sorry. Guess I broke my promise and overslept. Didn't know I was so tired."

"You were tired, darling. Know how long you've been sleeping?"

"No."

"Three hours."

"Really?"

"Uh huh. Feel better now?"

"Certainly. I'm ready for anything. What about you?"

"Still bright." She looked it, too. Her eyes sparkled with gaiety.

"You look as though you had some luck. Find anything?" I asked.

"Well—yes and no. There's a chant in the Prinn *Saracenic Rituals* relating to djin and efreet that could be used, I think. But the German translation is bad. I'm going to check it against the Latin."

"Now?"

"No, silly. Tomorrow. Now I'm going to relax. And you're going to relax with me. Let's go out and take in the town tonight; forget all about this crazy business."

"But what about—"

"Quit scowling, dear. It's all right. We need a vacation. The strain is too much, sometimes, when you think about what we're doing, what's in that room."

"Don't you think you'd be better off if you went home and rested, Lily?"

"No." Her eyes met mine. "It's dark, and I don't like the dark. It makes me think too much. It makes me dream about —*him*. Don't you see? I want light, people, something to make me forget."

She was shaking underneath her smile. Hysteria, nearly.

"All right. Did you—lock up?"

"Certainly. Stop fretting. The room is barred."

I rose to my feet.

"We'd better stop in at the hospital and see how Professor Keith is resting," I suggested.

"Please—not now. I'm all on edge. I just want to forget everything connected with this, for tonight. Let's not think about anything except us."

The suggestion was pleasant. Alluring. Alluring, as Lily was. She did sparkle. Her golden hair, the scarlet of her lips, the turquoise of her eyes—all seemed accentuated by inner fire. She slipped one arm in mine, possessively. I felt a tingling as her bare flesh met my wrist. We swept into the outer lobby of Rocklynn. I almost laughed.

Here was a crowd of bustling, officious

clerks and directors. White-coated chemists stepped briskly in and out of the long series of offices along the further corridors. Well-dressed visitors and patrons—giggling stenographers—bearded doctors who might have advertised laxatives in the popular magazines— a typical *Kildare* atmosphere about the place.

They didn't suspect what was going on in the private chamber down the hall. They didn't suspect that the golden girl on my arm was a white witch.

Again that white witch thought had crossed my mind. White witch. Why did I think of Lily that way? Was it because here in the afternoon sunlight she positively glittered? Her hair was *so* golden, her skin had such a milky texture. Ah, she was a pretty girl—nothing more.

"Supper?" I said. She nodded.

We glided down to the lobby, stepped into a cab. She snuggled close. I liked it.

But when I looked at her again, the semi-darkness of the cab's interior had wrought another change.

She wasn't a white witch any more. Her hair seemed darker. The golden tint was gone. The locks were almost brunette; brown with darker tones. The scarlet of her lips had turned to rose. A trick of late afternoon light.

"What are you staring at?" she giggled.

I got personal for a while. A good while, as we were tied up in traffic. By the time we neared the chosen destination it was almost twilight.

IT WAS twilight in the taxi.

And Lily's hair was gray. Not gray, exactly, and not platinum. There was a bluish tint. Her lips were purple.

Her lips were purple—or I was crazy.

Seeing things. A girl who changed in light and shadow. What was that? White witch—black witch—blue witch. What did they call it? Adaptation. Chamelon. But the term in sorcery. *Glamour.* Sympathetic magic. The ability to conform with surroundings. The attribute of a sorceress.

Circe had that power.

But Lily Ross?

Here she was, laughing away, affectionate and alluring. And I was picturing her as an enchantress. Ridiculous.

Well, it was best forgot. I did forget as we entered the supper club. But when we sat down under the red drapes I saw her titian locks flame forth in evil glory, saw her tawny skin glow, saw the crimson depths of her eyes.

Red witch, now!

I had a drink. Several drinks. In between I blinked. She talked, but I hardly listened.

"Let's dance."

I held the red witch in my arms, held a living flame close. Held her closer than I had ever held her, and felt her respond. Her response was flame. Fire kindling, feeding.

That fire engulfed me. I was tired of thinking, tired of toying with the incredible. The wine helped, and her beauty was a greater intoxication. I went down into the warmth—the warmth of her glowing hair, the warmth of her eyes, the red glow of her mouth.

Why deny it? When she suggested her apartment I didn't hesitate. This wasn't the Lily Ross I knew, but the realization no longer bothered me.

She clung to me in the cab, on the stairs. "We've been working too hard, darling," she whispered, over and over again, as though it were a formula. Her words no longer mattered. I was consumed by the flame of her nearness. The red, swift flame, coursing through my blood and being.

She opened the door. I stepped in. We embraced in the darkness for a long moment.

Then, "I've waited for this," she mur-

mured. "You and I, together. We're going to do wonderful things, aren't we?"

"You mean down at Rocklynn?" I asked lazily.

"Oh—*that!*" she laughed. "Of course not, silly! That's child's play. Don't you think so? It has no real meaning at all."

"Well—"

"You and I were meant for greater destinies." Her voice, vibrant in velvet darkness, had a new quality of its own. A *dark* quality. Peculiarly, I wondered what she looked like here. What color was her hair? And those lips, that now burned mine?

Lips that burned away my questions and left only a desire.

"Greater destinies," she whispered. "You've the brains. I have the beauty.

"You know, I've never felt this way before. Today I saw the futility of it—cooped up in a stuffy little laboratory when we might be playing for bigger stakes."

Did you ever have a woman make love to you with lips and arms while she talked like a bank director? It's an unnerving experience.

"Yes, we'll go a long way together. Keith's out of it, of course. We have the power now. The power to learn. The power to command. With those spells and incantations there are no heights we cannot achieve.

"I could be a queen—"

Well, it was enough. Lips or no lips, I knew. The shudder that ran through me could not be repressed. The voice was Lily's but the thoughts were Keith's. Not Keith's—but Keith's when he was possessed of the Devil.

I knew what I held in my arms now. The girl that had worked alone in the black chamber, under the glowing eyes of the monster in the cage. The girl that changed in light and darkness. The girl who desired power, who lured like the priestess of a Mystery.

I knew, and as I shuddered, she knew. Her arms pressed closer, her body moulded to mine, her warmth sought to drown my dread, and I felt her mouth seek mine, seek mine with a promise of ecstasy.

I pushed her back. She sensed it, but suddenly embraced me. Again her mouth neared. I felt it graze my lips and then—Lily Ross bent in the darkness, and with the fury of a tigress, locked her teeth in my throat!

9. Devil's Bargain

AS THE tiny, pointed fangs met, I shook her free.

A feline growl rose in her throat. Her panting breath rasped as her hands raked my face.

"You fool!"

Again her mouth sought my neck. I lifted one arm and let go. I had to do it.

Just a short uppercut to the chin and she slumped to the floor. I stepped over, switched on the lights, and carried her limp body to the sofa.

She lay there, eyes closed, a golden witch under lamplight. From her bruised mouth ran a tiny crimson trickle.

The sleeping sorceress—

I got cold water, a towel, brandy. It took three minutes before her eyes fluttered open. By that time I'd been in her bedroom and found what I was seeking. So when her eyes did open, they focussed directly on the bronze crucifix held before them.

A look of pain seared her face. She writhed.

"No—take it away—please—"

I held her twisting body taut.

"Look!" I commanded.

"No—fool—let me go—I can't—"

The crucifix pressed closer. I placed the cool metal against her forehead.

She screamed.

I drew it off and stared at the livid welt

—the imprint of the cross burned into her white flesh.

Perspiration beaded my brow, but I didn't desist. I knew what had to be done. Exorcism. The casting out of demons.

First Keith, and now Lily. She had to be freed.

Her moanings ceased. I waved the crucifix before her and whispered.

"Lily, darling. Look at the cross. Look at it. I know it hurts, but you must look. You must. Just gaze from under your eyelids. I won't burn you with it. Just look. Look and sleep. Try to sleep, Lily. You're tired, so very tired. So tired. Sleep. And look at the cross. Sleep."

Science and witchcraft, eh? Well, let's see what a little modern hypnotism will do.

Psychic trauma or possession by a fiend, call it what you will. I waved the crucifix and commanded her to sleep. The light glittered on the weaving outline. Her eyes followed it, her ears heard my murmurs.

Lily slept.

MY SHIRT was wet clear through. I was trembling. But she slept. And I kept whispering. "Lily, come back! Lily fight it. Come back. Lily, come back."

The tremors came then. Convulsions. I saw her writhe in agony and still I didn't stop. Didn't dare stop.

She moaned, and it wasn't her voice. Her hands darted like talons to her temples, as though to tear away the scar. Her face was the worst—changing from pallor to deep flush.

But my voice was winning. I felt that. Her whimpers grew weaker. She slept under the cross, accepted the vision.

The force within her waned, then blazed in a final access of fury. That's when my hand trembled so that I nearly dropped the crucifix. When her face began to look like *other* faces.

They bubbled up from beneath her flesh, those malignant expressions of hate and rage. The expressions seen on the faces of the schizophrenic, the demented. The faces of madness—and what was madness in olden days but demoniac possession?

They came now, grinning their defiance. And the voice and the cross fought them, fought them down, fought them from her being.

At the end she slept, and I slumped beside her. The crucifix rested against her bare arm, but it no longer burned. I had won. She had won. I knew that Satan had returned to his body in the glass cage.

In the morning's awakening we made our decision. I told her what she didn't know—and she told me what I had guessed; about the "dizzy spells" she had experienced while working alone in the chamber.

"I'm going back there," I insisted. "You need rest. I'll carry on alone, and I'm forewarned as well as forearmed by what you and Keith have gone through. I won't succumb, I promise you—not until I've found a way to get rid of His Satanic Majesty once and for all."

"Be careful, darling—"

I smiled grimly. "You're telling me? But it has to be done. That menace must be removed, quickly. If you or Keith had been allowed to continue it might spread like a plague. There's no choice in the matter. Either we get rid of Satan or he gets rid of us. That's the bargain."

"You'll call me regularly?"

"Of course. And in a day or two both you and Keith can come down again to help. But now—I'm going back to hell."

Lily smiled. "May God be with you," she whispered.

10. Powers of Darkness

THAT night we worked alone, the Devil and I.

The Devil and I, in that black tower. The red braziers burned as a beacon, but

the red glare from his eyes blazed a still stronger warning.

All alone in the dark room, behind locked doors. A crouching fiend in a cage. A crouching man at a table.

From time to time the ebon monstrosity reared ponderously to pad back and forth behind the barrier. From time to time I rose and paced the floor with equal restlessness.

Frequently a malignant scowl convulsed the black and bony face. Often, I too, scowled.

I turned the yellowed pages of a dozen bulky books. I scanned the notes written in Lily's precise handwriting. But learning the mantic arts is a grim business. No wonder wizards grew gray!

Here was White Magic—the nine steps in the evocation of angels. The command of the Seven Stewards of Heaven; Arathron, Bethor, Phaleg, Och, Hazith, Ophiel, and Phul. White Magic, and a jumble of theosophical arcanum which would be of no use here. Wrong lead.

Black Magic—ashes of hosts and dried toads—unguents of grease and blood of corpses heated over human bones—burning crucifixes—gibberish.

Red Magic? The highest esoteric art was never written or told. Nothing here.

Try divination.

I tried divination for hours. Long hours in the black room.

Long hours under hell-spawned eyes. Eyes that watched me as I studied. Eyes that seemed to pierce the glass cage, to peer over my shoulder as I read, peer and mock.

The file on divination was huge. Could I evoke an omen, a clue? Divination—

There was aeromancy, alectryomancy, aleuromancy, alphitomancy—but I had neither wind nor rooster, flour nor hard dough.

Amniomancy? Use the caul of a newborn child? No. And the horrid anthropomancy—prophecy by use of human entrails—no, again.

Arithomancy, Astragalomancy. Both mathematical tricks, long since discredited. Axinomancy and Belomancy were relics of the old "trial by ordeal" of Saxon days.

Capnomancy? Divination by smoke-wreaths from a drug-sprinkled fire? Hashish visions. A fake.

Cephalonomancy, Dactyliomancy, Gastromancy, Geomancy, Gyromancy. I had no donkey's head to sprinkle with live coals, no finger ring, no gift at ventriloquism, nor was I a sand-diviner. I might try Gyromancy as a last resort—walking in a circle until I grew dizzy and fell. The direction of the fall had significance.

Oh, sure. Sorcery is so fascinating, until you analyze it.

Hippomancy, the Celtic trick with white horses. Out.

Hydromancy, Ichthyomancy, Lampodomancy, Lithomancy, Margaritomancy, Myomancy, Onomancy, Onychomancy, Oomancy, Parthenomancy.

Fine stuff! All superstitious nonsense, though the last—divination by employing a virgin—might prove entertaining.

Well, Pyromancy, Rhabdomancy, Sciamancy.

Sciamancy. Evocation of the dead. Was there a proven formulae here in Lily's list? There wasn't. I was singularly grateful. To command the dead sorcerously—dangerous ground.

Spondonomancy, Sycomancy, Theomancy.

That was the end of divination.

And still Satan stared. I was becoming more and more conscious of that stare. Satan grinned. The grin burned through me. I'd find a way! I had to.

There was no sleep for me that day, and it was almost midnight when I blundered back into the notebooks and hit the section on *Elementals*.

Elementals. The primitive spirits.

The gnomes inherent in earth own the kingdom of the North, and they exert the melancholic influence over the temperament of man. Their sign is the Bull, and they are commanded by the Magic Sword. Their sovereign is Gob.

NONSENSE!

The sylphs are of the air, their kingdom is the East, and their influence bilious. Under the sign of the Eagle, they are controlled by the holy pentacles, as is their sovereign, Paralda.

Well?

Salamanders are spirits of fire, and their kingdom lies South. Sanguine in their influence, under the sign of the Lion, and the command of the trident, their sovereign is Djin—yes, the prototype of all *djinn*.

And the undines of the West, those who evoke the phlegmatic aspect of men, are governed under the sign of Aquarius, commanded by the cup of libations, and under the sovereignty of Necksa.

Gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, undines. Earth, air, fire and water. Astrology and oriental legend, and mysticism.

Except that—there were spells.

Spells for the evocation of elementals. Elementals, known to our theology as fiends. Fiends of the Pit.

Spells to command them, written in Lily Ross's handwriting. Taken from the tomes. Precise directions for mixing incense, and drawing figures, and reciting commands.

"There are nearly a hundred proven spells and incantations. Genuine." That's what Keith had said.

Genuine spells. Recipes to raise daemons. "A pinch of salt and a tablespoonfull of butter. Bake well under low flame."

Not exactly. These recipes might affect the stomach, but only with a nausea of dread. "A pinch of ground bone, and a cup of blood. Place under the fires of Hell."

I was light-headed. Light-headed enough to try.

After all, I had to experiment, didn't I? Find a way to evoke, familiarize myself with rituals? Why shouldn't I take this perfectly absurd routine about the gnomes, for instance, and see what happened?

Lily's marginal notes said, "Sword in cupboard, lower shelf. Important—use no other. Steel sword. Steel alone guards and commands gnomes."

I had the silly-looking old blade in my hand before I knew what I was doing. I had the blue chalk, too, as directed, and I was kneeling down facing North. The gnome kingdom.

Grimm's fairy tales? Why not find out?

Draw the mathematical design, as directed. Draw the sign of the bull—the peculiarly Egyptian sign, so indicative of ancient stylization. The bull of Apis, of astrology, of ancient days. A blue bull. Make it big. The gnome materializes on that sign and cannot leave it until you command. Draw it big and play safe.

Play safe? With this nonsense?

But there was a black bulk in a glass cage grinning out at me and this wasn't nonsense.

I waved the sword. I realized what a ridiculous figure I cut in that dark room, waving a "magic sword" before a lot of chalk drawings scribbled schoolboy-fashion on the floor. But there was nobody to watch me—except the glaring eyes of Satan in his prison.

Slowly I mumbled the incantation. Lily had accented it and phoneticized carefully. No mistakes. Now to recite it aloud. The sword pointed north—thus. My feet touched the tip of the outer blue circle. At the syllable breaks I must point the sword at the horns of the Bull. Sychronize. So.

"Oh Gob—" I began.

It sounded foolish. Self-conscious.

Grimm's fairy tales. But I persisted. It didn't take long, after all.

No. It didn't take long before I felt the cold wind strike my face. Felt the sword tingle in my hand as I pointed, felt an electric surge sweep up my arm. Heard the syllables blaze out, saw the flame of the braziers *bend* before the words.

And then, in the Sign of the Bull, the tiny, crouching figure. It coiled into shape, into substance. The little swarthy creature with the mouse-like face, the rodent body, and the beady, glittering eyes. Standing there, bowing. The gnome.

Grim fairy tales!

The gnome. The little man who *was* there. The little man that hid in the woods. The little dwarf man who tempted maidens in the forest. The little man who guarded the mines and the gold of earth, the little man who haunted the dark mountaintops of the north countries and dug the burrows beneath the hills.

One of the ancient Pictish, Celtic *little people*. The tiny race of troglydites that lived on earth before men came, retreated to the dark depths like the serpent. The figure known to all legends and all times. The dwarf. The troll. The kobold. The Brownie. The leprechaun.

"Master?"

Oh, that piping little voice! That shocking, detestable little voice, so hateful in its reality!

And it *was* real.

I dropped the sword.

Then I picked it up. This was the sword of command. Of command. The thought hit me then. I could—command.

I COULD command this creature out of myth, command it to do anything I desired. Anything. To—kill. To burrow under a building and send it toppling to ruins, as he and his fellows toiled like rats. The way they used to burrow under castles, in ancient legend. Like a warlock, I could send it on errands of death. It was my servant, my familiar now. I could have it and its fellows. Yes, thousands of them. Merely by command. Command with the steel of the sword.

The thought burned. Burned like Satan's eyes. Burned like fire.

Fire.

The salamander!

I won't describe the next hour. The wave of elation that swept over me is too much a part of hysteria. I drew the Lion, kindled the flame, waved the trident. The yellow blaze revealed the lizard figure that grew out of flame, absorbed it. Fiend, imp, archetype of hell's legions, the salamander of evil. And the hissing inflection in the word, "Master?"

Here were spells that worked. Here were orisons and litanies that brought results. I couldn't send Satan back, but I could conjure up his hosts.

Conjure up his hosts! Why not? Imagine this tower room filled with waiting monstrosities from myth. Imagine *rooms* filled with them. A horde, a vast and limitless horde, all calling me—"Master!"

Master of demons. Master of evil. Lord of a power greater than any known.

For the first time I began to realize the feeling inherent in that word. Power. Power to rule. Power over wind and water and fire and air. Over earth. Power to rule earth.

Now I knew how Keith must have felt. He'd dreamed of something like this. Men laughed at evil, did they? All the better, they would not burn him at the stake for sorcery but permit him to evoke evil unmolested. He'd been a fool, Keith had. Trying to interest millionaires. Why did he need any allies? One man to rule them all, that was the way.

And Lily. Silly child! Personal vanity was her downfall. She wanted to be a Cleopatra, did she? Sheer melodrama. Juvenile. She might have been a queen—

greater than a Circe. Queen of evil. But I'd stopped that. Her mistake was to rely on me for help.

I wouldn't make that mistake. I'd rely on no one. I and I alone would evoke and rule. I had the power, didn't I? I had Satan in a cage. He was no longer Prince of Darkness. I could take his place.

The King is dead. Long live the King!

Why not?

A week ago, if anyone had foretold my future I should have scoffed. Like everyone else, I suppose. But now it was real, I had this opportunity. The goal of witch and wizard through the ages. The powers of darkness mine to command. Why hesitate?

Why not evoke? Use the rituals, use all of them. Fill the room with a legion of nightmare shapes. *Revenants*. Ghouls and *efrits. Vrykolas, hippocampi, amphisbanae, striges*. An army, a black army. An army to conquer the world.

Keep them ringed in the magic figures, until the word of release was given. Keep them ringed, and then—

But what about Satan? What about the spell to send him back? Back to where—to hell? But we could have hell here on earth!

And why not?

An earth filled with man-made war and misery. An earth filled with grasping, cheating, lying, stealing, raping, murdering, crazy humans. Filled with pestilence, disease, idiocy. Let the Lord of Evil come into his own!

Sweep away humanity. Sweep away the earth. Black gifts the creatures might grant you for the power. Eternal life, eternal ecstasy. Lips might whisper secrets. Primal forces to invoke and control.

Why send Satan back at all?

I glanced at the listless black figure in the cage. Glanced and smiled. Smiled and laughed suddenly.

Was this—this thing—the fabled Lucifer? This mangy, decrepit, listless bag of bones with the sick eyes and whining sneer? Was this whimpering mongrel really the Arch-Enemy?

I felt stronger than he did. I *was* stronger than he. I had stripped him of his power and taken it for my own.

I was the Master of Satan!

Plans, plans, plans. Dreams swirling in the blackness. The salamander staring, the gnome crouching in the chalk-dust. Yes, and I, standing in darkness, chanting out invocations. Chanting for endless hours, gripped by an inner elation and compulsion.

The room, surging with power. Pulsing with vibrations. And filled with shapes.

Until I stood there, amidst a crowded maze of circles and designs, each filled with a figure. A bowing figure that croaked, "Master!"

I stood there and made a Hell on earth.

11. Hell on Earth

"SLOWLY now—it's a surprise."

I guided Lily and Keith toward the door marked *Private*. Keith leaned feebly on my arms, but he pressed forward eagerly.

"Surprise?" gurgled Lily. "You mean—you've sent him back?"

I smiled. "You'll see," I told her.

She and Keith gave me a long look. I didn't like it. They seemed too conspiratorial. Eying me. I'd open their eyes for them in a minute.

I pushed open the door. "Come into my parlor," I said.

Keith kept staring at me. So did Lily.

"Ladies first," I said. Lily suddenly shrugged and stepped in. Keith followed her. I went in and shut the door. Locked it.

Then I faced them.

They faced the room.

They didn't say a word. They couldn't. It was too overpowering.

I'd taken the drapes off, swept the room clear of tables and cupboards. Needed more space. The place reeked with mingled incense odors, but even the braziers were gone to provide more floor area.

Floor area for *visitors*.

They stood there and gazed at Hell. My Hell. The Hell I had created by incantation, by invocation. Around the glass cage housing Satan the legions swarmed. One of each. A Noah's Ark, in a way, of horrors.

Hell's sample-display showroom. Take your pick. Plenty more where these came from.

The thoughts made me laugh. I did laugh, too. The noise grated against the silence, and there was a vast answering response. "Master!"

"What have you done?" Keith's eyes blazed anger.

"Merely played sorcerer's apprentice," I told him. "How do you like it?"

"These—monsters," Keith spluttered. "Do you realize what would happen if you lost control?"

"Certainly." I smiled.

"It's insane," he muttered.

"It's science," I answered. "Isn't this your dream come true? Your dream of proving the validity of sorcery?"

"It's a nightmare. I want no part of this. Send these creatures back—there's directions for that. Send them back at once."

"Change of heart, eh? Well, recognize another change at the same time. You're not giving me orders any more, Keith. I'm in charge here."

Keith paled. He faced me with an intent stare.

Lily stepped between us.

"You must send them back," she whispered. "You were going to get rid of Satan, remember?"

"What do you mean—remember? Do you think I'm a child? Of course I remember that foolishness. But it's no good. Think of the power I possess. Think of what we could do with these creatures."

"Creatures!" Lily quavered the word.

She stood like a golden goddess, surrounded by the bobbing, weaving, crouching shapes of darkness. The tiny men with the malignant faces, the snake-like figures that shimmered in air, the canine visages of ghouls, the monstrous bulk of squatting incubae, the leprous-white crawlers. An aquarium, a menagerie, a gallery of fiends. They filled the room, each in his tiny island of chalk. Behind was the cage with the figure of Satan slumped on the floor. Had he no interest in this gathering? Where was his burning desire to escape? No matter.

"Creatures," Lily quavered, and her glance rested on me in strange appeal. "Darling—for my sake—send them back. You're not well, you've overworked, you can't think what you're doing—"

"Enough." I stepped closer to her. "I'm not crazy, if that's what you mean. Three days in this room hasn't made a wreck out of me. I've learned more about the essence and nature of evil than you both know. And I'm going to use that knowledge and that power."

"The Devil is through, in other words," Keith commented, dryly. "You're taking over."

For a moment the bald statement seemed to paralyze me. As if through a fog I caught his meaning. Then I chuckled.

"That's just about the size of it. From now on, I'm in command. These creatures are my minions. At the signal they will be released."

I lowered my voice.

"I've got a plan. It's all thought out. I've done a lot of thinking here these past days. I know just what to do—how to use these things. Rule, I tell you! And

you two will share the power with me, if you like."

"Send them back," Lily begged. "You don't know what's happening to you."

"Happening to me? I'm waking up, that's all. I feel more alive at this moment than I ever have. I'm strong, and he's weak. I'm going to do what no man has ever dared. I'll open the gates! Lucifer will again rule earth. Why shouldn't he—I mean I—he—*I*—"

THEN I realized.

Realized what I was saying.

I thought, "Satan," and I said, "I."

I. Satan.

I looked at Keith and the girl. Their eyes were fixed in fascination on my face.

My face!

Lily's hand was holding something out.

A mirror.

I took it.

Took the silver glass and stared at my face in the mirror. Stared at the black, goatish countenance, at the growing beard on the chin, stared—transfixed—at the darkened temples from which *the two horns were beginning to protrude!*

What had happened to Keith and Lily had happened to me. Three days in a room with the black man, three days in a room while his will gnawed at my soul in darkness, burrowed in.

The change had taken place. *I was Satan!*

The mirror fell and shattered. I stood there, looking at the dark skin on the back of my hands. The dark skin on the back of my—claws.

Turning, turning; body and mind and soul. Cloud of darkness pouring out of the cage and into my brain.

I was Satan and I had evoked demons and I would rule earth.

Madness!

But why not?

Nobody was dashing holy water in *my* face. Nobody was waving any crucifixes. Nobody was shooting any—

I saw it out of the corner of my eye. Keith's holster, with the two guns, lying on the little table near the door. Saw it as he saw it and made a dash. I got there first.

I pulled the guns out and pointed them very carefully. Keith stopped in his tracks.

"No you don't," I chuckled. "No one is shooting me, if you please. Lily—the door is locked. Very tightly." She'd made a dash, too. "We are all alone now. With our—servitors." I chuckled again. It was beginning to feel very pleasant.

"Stand still, both of you," I directed.

"Madman," Keith shouted. "Put down those revolvers!"

"Please—" Lily whispered.

I slipped one weapon into my pocket, held the other high in my right hand. My blackening right hand. I could *feel* it change. I *pulsed*. Every nerve tingling, as the change completed.

One claw held the revolver. The other rose.

"Now, you two. When I lower my left hand, our little playmates will be released. I don't need my right hand for anything but keeping you covered. So remember. Stand and watch."

"Satan!" Keith mumbled. "Satan incarnate!"

"Please, darling," Lily whispered. "Oh, please, darling—"

I laughed. The grinning throng waited behind me. Waited, and ravened. I could feel their pulsations mingling with my own. How they lusted to be free! To walk the earth once more; to walk and creep and crawl and lope and fly and—kill! They waited and they crouched for my command. My command would free them. From the black tower they'd swarm out over the world of night and the shriek of earth in torment would mock the walls of heaven.

The strength welling in me. . . .

I lifted my left hand high. One gesture now—

Then Lily moved.

"Back or I'll shoot!" I screamed.

She came forward. Her eyes held no hate and no fear, only a pleading that burned and burned. I had to get rid of that burning. Kill her, kill her and release them. Free the hordes of Hell!

My left hand swooped. My right hand moved out. The hand of Satan. I flicked my wrist, pressed the trigger—and sent a bullet crashing into my brain.

12. Fall of Lucifer

"EASY," I said. "Easy."

"Must probe," grunted Keith. "Get it out. Silver bullet or no, there might be infection."

"Easy," I repeated. Then, "Are you sure it's gone?"

Lily smiled down at me.

"Of course, darling. They're all gone. And the cage is empty. The instant you fired the gun they disappeared. Not in a cloud of brimstone, either. They just—weren't there."

I smiled. It wasn't so hard, because Keith had the little silver pellet out.

"Lucky shot," he commented. "Just missed grazing the parietal lobe."

"I still can't understand it," I said. "Can't understand what made me shoot myself and why Satan disappeared."

"The oldest story in the world," answered Keith. "Virtue triumphant. It fought the evil in you and won, even though you weren't conscious of it. When Lily came toward you the battle was resolved. You and the Devil fought it out in your own soul, and you won.

"And that was the secret of getting rid of Satan. The human soul pitted itself naked against his will and denied him."

I shook my head as Keith continued.

"Evil preys on inner weakness. In my case, Satan focussed his forces on my dominant quality of ambition. That ambition, directed sanely, caused me to embark on scientific research. Perverted just a little, Satan made my ambition become a lust for power at any price.

"In Lily's possession, her natural feminine vanity was accentuated to the point where she desired utter adoration. Again the psychology of evil came into play. And when the Devil invaded you, he worked through your love of learning, turning your scholarly inclinations into the field of sorcery."

"It's hard to believe now," I said. "Maybe it was all a mass hallucination. Those old wive's tales—"

Keith chuckled.

"Perhaps what we saw and called Satan *wasn't* physically real. We each saw a different figure in the glass cage, and Considine and Wintergreen might have had their own concepts. Even these creatures you materialized might be merely focal imaginative visions.

"But this I know. Whether we choose to personify it as Satan, or the Devil, or the Powers of Darkness—evil exists as a force in this world of ours. Describe it in terms of witchcraft or psychiatry as you will—evil is real."

Lily laid her head on my shoulder. "Let's forget it all now," she suggested.

"Suits me. Got any methods to suggest?"

"Well, if you're not too sick—"

"Too sick? I feel swell."

"Well, if you're not too sick, I suggest we celebrate."

"Fine idea," I responded.

"Sure," said Keith. "Let's go out and raise hell! Why—what's the matter?"

"Nothing at all," I replied; and promptly fainted.

"Five times they've chucked me out — they won't give me a haunting license!"

The Superfluous Phantom

By MALCOLM JAMESON

Believe me, he was one of the slickest haunters in the business—with a class A diploma from the Spooks Preparatory School . . . but the League just wouldn't *let him practice!*

THE lights in the stalled subway train blinked and went out. A foreman leaned over the edge of the platform and waved a lantern.

"Okay, men—the current's off. Grab him and get him up outa there. That's swell! Now—up here with him."

The two guards down on the tracks heaved and swung. The limp form rose and slid onto the station platform, then lay motionless. The morbid, sensation-hungry crowd that gathers as if by magic at every disaster, however trivial, reluctantly backed away a little, leaving a clear spot in the center of which lay the inert figure in its dirt-smeared, mussed brown

suit. Only one man pushed forward—a smallish middle-aged man with a moth-eaten looking goatee and carrying a dilapidated black satchel.

"I'm a doctor," he told the guard who tried to stop him. He dropped to his knees and put a hand on the prostrate man's chest. In a moment he stood up, shaking his head with an air of solemn finality. "He's gone. No pulse—no respiration. There is nothing to be done."

Some in the crowd thought they saw a sudden tremor sweep the corpse, one man claimed afterward that he saw an eyelid flicker, but at the moment no one said anything. They simply stood, as metropolitan crowds usually do under the circumstances, popeyed, gaping and moronic—looking on for the sheer lust of seeing.

The doctor did not wait, but bustled away as if in a great hurry to keep an appointment. The crowd closed its ranks behind him and continued to stare. There would be other things to see, soon. The police would come, and reporters and stretcher bearers. And best of all, photographers. Every super-moron there was dumbly hoping that somehow he might get included in the picture so as to have something to boast of to his friends tomorrow. Then, above in the street a gong clanged and a siren shrieked its wailing song. The climax was at hand!

"All right, all right—outa the way, you—get going!"

Husky policemen shouldered their way through the mass of thrill seekers in a resistless phalanx. The sergeant's eye caught the picture of the train stalled halfway down the platform and thought he knew the answer—another suicide. But when he broke through to the inner circle and saw the prone figure on the concrete he saw that there was no blood on it. The guard shrugged and jerked a thumb toward the track. "Third rail," was all he said. "The guy's dead."

The sergeant wheeled and called out to the men behind him.

"A shock case, fellows. Jump up to the wagon and bring down the pulmotor. Then go to work on him and don't let up until I give the word. I've seen these third-railers pull through before."

The Emergency Squad went into action and while they were administering artificial respiration other cops cleared the jammed station. One by one the onlookers gave ground.

"Such a nice looking young man," commiserated one woman. "It's a pity. Too bad they didn't catch the man that pushed him." But nobody paid attention. As they shuffled out a cameraman came dashing in, demanding, "Where's the stiff?" and the outgoing sheep sighed. But they consoled themselves with the thought that in the very next editions they would be reading something like this:

"During the early rush hour today, a young man tentatively identified as John Wicks, 24, address unknown, jumped or fell in front of an uptown local. Trainman Horatio Z. Evans managed to stop the train before the wheels passed over the body, but when Wicks was extricated from beneath the first car it was found he had been electrocuted. Police rendered first aid, but their efforts proved unavailing. Service was resumed after a short delay."

That is, that is what they expected to read. But, as a matter of fact, they did nothing of the sort. For the first aid efforts did avail. After a few hours of mauling Johnny Wicks opened his eyes and saw the cops bending over him.

"Aw, lay off, won't you," he begged, "I wanna sleep."

Whereupon he tried to roll over and call it a day. They didn't let him do that, of course, but that is neither here nor there. The big thing—the main point to be remembered about the little episode is

this: *Johnny Wicks did not die!* Not for an instant.

We-ell—maybe for an instant, or for a couple of instants—but hardly longer than that. After a little he signed a lot of papers, then walked home, more sore about ruining his new brown suit than anything. He would have to throw it away, now. The only other immediate consequence of his mishap was that for a few days he had to take a lot of kidding from his friends. After that the memory of it simply faded into the past. He hardly ever thought of it any more.

THE summer turned into fall, fall into winter, and in the course of time it was summer again. It was on a hot August night that Johnny went to bed early so as to be up early the next day. He was about to go on his vacation and did not mean to lose an hour of it. He was considerably annoyed, therefore, when shortly after he fell asleep he woke up again. It was with a sudden, scared start that puzzled him, and to add to his mystification an unseasonally icy gust of wind swept the room. Somehow there was a hint of the uncanny in it and his skin goose-pimpled and crawled in spite of him, for he thought he detected in the chill air the mouldy odor of the grave—an observation which itself struck him as odd the moment he made it, for not once in his whole life had he smelled a grave.

He glanced at the clock and saw by its luminous face that it was exactly midnight. At the same instant he unaccountably remembered that it was just a year to the day since he had had that ridiculous experience in the subway when the jostling of a hoodlum had caused him to be pronounced dead. But that was water over the dam, Wicks told himself and reached down for the cover. He was not going to stay awake and suffer, even if it was a cold night in August.

It was then he saw It.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded angrily of the seven-foot smoky apparition standing at the foot of his bed. The thing was vague and whitish, and as he challenged it it raised two elongated skinny arms and spread two sets of wispy, talon-like fingers.

"Who-o-o-o-osh! Ye-e-e-a-ow! Screee-e—e—e——" was what the thing said back to him, the last of its unearthly wails tapering off into a strangled silence.

"Oh, a ghost, huh?" commented Johnny, sitting upright in bed, wide awake by then. "Well, ghosty, run along and peddle your apples somewhere else. *I* haven't murdered anybody and nobody was ever murdered in this room that I know of. Anyhow, I don't believe in ghosts, so you're wasting time. Scram!"

Johnny Wicks slid down into the bed again and adjusted his pillow. But he kept a wary eye on the amorphous cloud hovering over the foot of his bed. It was waveringly condensing into something shaped much more like a man, but except for its initial screeches had uttered no other sound. Presently the apparition completed its reorganization. Then it stretched forth its ghostly arm and pointed an accusatory finger at the young fellow in the bed.

"You didn't kill me, no," admitted the ghost, croaking the words in a deep sepulchral voice, "but you're doing something worse and I can't stand it." It suddenly struck Johnny that the voice sounded a great deal like his own—that is, what his own might sound like if he had a bad cold and shouted down a cistern. "You're ruining my career, that's what you're doing," reproached the spectral visitor, "and for no reason except your own damn selfishness."

Johnny Wicks was flabbergasted. He hadn't the slightest idea what the phantom was talking about.

"*I'm* not taking it lying down, either,"

continued the ghost, threateningly, his voice getting stronger and more distinct and more and more like Johnny's own. "I'm going to haunt you until you make it right, that is what I'm going to do. You've *gotta* make things right—I can't go on this way."

The agitation of the spectre was painfully obvious. He swayed and twisted like a tornado cloud and his surfaces were wrinkled into little waves by the turbulence of the ethereal stuff of which he was composed. It made Johnny Wicks think of a dense cloud of cigar smoke over a poker table, stirred into erratic movement by the exhalations of the players.

"Me, Mac?" Johnny asked. "What have I got to do with you?" Then, realizing how ridiculous it was to be sitting up in bed at that time of night arguing with a strange ghost, he added, very firmly:

"Listen, you bunch of fog, whoever you are. I don't know you and I don't want to know you. I don't get your racket and I don't care a hang what it is. I'm not interested. I've got a lot of important sleeping to do between now and morning and I'm going to get on with it. So pull yourself together and get the hell outa here before I throw you out."

"Yeah!" sneered the ghost, immediately belligerent. "Well, try it."

He swelled up to double his size, looking very fearsome, and uttered another of his long-drawn "Whooshes."

"Bosh!" said Johnny, and reached for the light switch.

THE illumination did not dispel the ghost, however. He was still here. At first he appeared to be a shapeless blue-green cloud, but he shrank rapidly until he seemed to be almost as solid as the living Johnny Wicks himself. And, to Johnny's further bewilderment, his own, exact double. Except that, instead of wearing pink pajamas, he wore the grease and lime stained brown suit of the night of the subway near-tragedy. It was amazing, for that suit had long since been burned.

"Start the rough stuff any time," challenged the ghost, insolently, "only I'd advise you to take it easy. You can sock me all right, but watch out you don't knock yourself out when you do. I'm not as solid as I look."

Johnny was already swinging when the ghost said that, but he hastily pulled his punch. The warning had the ring of sound advice. Yet he had promised to throw his unwanted visitor out and he had to make good. Otherwise he might find himself permanently haunted, and that was one thing that Johnny Wicks felt was unneeded to round out his life.

He considered the cloudy, nebulous nature of his guest and decided upon another maneuver. On his table stood an antiquated electric fan which he rarely used for the reason that it was so noisy. But now he plugged it in and flicked the switch. He trained it on the phantom, listened and watched as the wheezy motor buzzed up to speed, but little happened. His unsubstantial caller merely wavered ripplingly, but did not budge from where he stood. Nor did he alter the supercilious I-told-you-so sneer that was on his face. That infuriated Johnny particularly, for he knew just what the thing was thinking—or thought he must—because it looked so exactly like himself.

"Live people," remarked the ghost with exasperating smugness, "often make that error. Because we look like smoke, they think we are smoke. But go ahead. Experiment all you want—I've got all eternity. Then when you've made up your mind you're stuck with me, we can get down to brass tacks. I came here to get justice, and by the Elder Shades, I'm going to get it, even if I have to haunt you night and day. And pal, believe me you, I'm one of the slickest haunters in the

business. I'm only a young guy, but I've got a class A diploma from the S. P. S. and a *cum laude* to make it more binding."

Johnny Wicks gritted his teeth. The conceit and impudence of the fellow was unbearable. It was all the more so because of the fellow's close resemblance to him.

"And what the hell, if I may ask," put he frigidly, "is the S. P. S.?"

"Why, you poor dope—the Spooks Preparatory School," replied the phantom with some condescension. "You go there first—the minute you kick off. I was a natural for them. I got high marks in everything—chain clanking, body dragging, eerie yowling, materializations and dematerialization, stair-creaking, raising mouldy odors, and all the rest of it. Gee! My prof was proud of me!"

The ghost paused to gloat a moment over the memory of his own prowess. Then his face suddenly clouded with the gloom he had displayed earlier. He sighed a dismal sigh—truly a ghastly sigh. "And to think," he went on bitterly, "that after that I am not allowed to practice. And all on account of you, leading your selfish, heedless life. Five times I've been, hat in hand, to the head office of the L. P. A. G., and five times they've chucked me out. They won't give me a haunting license."

Johnny thought the apparition was going to break down and weep, he looked so dejected. He wasn't at all sure he knew what the ghost was talking about, but since there appeared to be no way of getting rid of him, Johnny figured there could be no harm done in getting a little information. He was beginning to acquire an interest in the life and customs of the shades.

"If you were so darned good at the S. P. S.," he asked, "why is it that the L. P. A. G., whoever they are, won't let you practice? And when you bust in here and pester me this way, aren't you practicing? And when it comes to that, if you are unlicensed and I want to sleep, why shouldn't I report you to your own L. P. A. G. and let them handle it? I hate to be a squealer, Mac, but that's the way I feel about it."

"GO AHEAD and report," defied the ghost. "Nothing would suit me better. To get to the big shot you have to die and serve your apprenticeship. And that's all I want you to do. Then you'll meet the fellow in charge of assignments for the League for the Protection of Authentic Ghosts. He's the guy who says who can haunt and who can't, and dishes out the locations. If you're good—and on the level—he might slip you something choice, like the scene of a juicy triple murder. F'rinstance, I know a guy—but, oh hell, what's the use? I can't get anywhere as long as you're alive."

He stopped again and gave vent to another of his hollow sighs—a soul-wringing, swishy expiration calculated to send chills racing up and down the spine of any luckless listener. Those sighs were like gusts of stagnant air fanned from a long forgotten tomb.

"It's a lousy system," murmured the ghost disconsolately. "Why couldn't they have told me I was a phoney before I put in all that time and hard work at school?"

"I'm sure I don't know," answered Johnny Wicks, mildly. "I never considered that angle. But now that you bring it up, I thought that all ghosts were phoney. What makes you any different?"

"I'm illegitimate, that's what," replied the spectre sullenly. "You double-crossed me—you didn't stay dead like you oughta had. That leaves me in a tough spot."

The meaning of this strange interview was beginning to dawn on Johnny's mind. Could it be that during the brief time he was unconscious that night that he had generated a ghost—a premature one, so to speak? But the ghost was continuing to pour out his woes.

"You see, I can't prove that I . . . that is, you . . . I mean we— Oh, skip it, you know what I mean . . . that one or the other of us was killed when you fell on the third rail. I admit I was wrong—I shoulda waited. But when that doctor guy stepped right up and said you were dead, that was enough for me. I took right off. The next thing I knew I was in the primary class at the S. P. S. It was only last night when I took the final tests for a license that I found out you didn't die at all. They put me on cemetery patrol, but there wasn't a grave there I could call my own. The examiner got suspicious and wanted to see my death certificate. Of course, you know, every ghost don't have to have a grave—like the ones of fellows eaten by tigers and things like that—but they do have to be dead.

"So they looked up my pedigree. Now I'm sunk. They say that as long as you're alive, I don't even exist. Can you tie that?"

"It's tough," conceded Johnny Wicks, "but I don't see what I can do about it."

"You bet it's tough," replied the ghost fiercely, "and there's plenty you can do about it. You gotta make it right. You gotta kick off for keeps. Hang yourself, jump out the window or take a slug of cyanide—it's all the same to me. But make it snappy so we can get back to headquarters in time to qualify."

"Never mind the 'we,'" said Johnny, a little angrily. "You leave me out of this. If you were dizzy enough to go off half-cocked on account of what some stranger said, that's your hard luck. Why, you silly nitwit, you didn't even know whether the fellow was a regular doctor or not. Anyhow, if you think I'm going to kill myself just to get you out of a jam, you're plain nuts."

"You'll be sorry," threatened the ghost, puffing himself up to three times his former dimensions and taking on what was intended to be a terrifying look. "You haven't seen anything yet."

But Johnny Wicks was not going to be intimidated by any counterfeit ghost.

"Get this, spook," he said very determinedly, "you can go plumb to wherever it is that no-good ghosts go to. Or go haunt the bozo that pushed me—er, us—off the platform. Or try your luck on the Interboro; they were the people that furnished the juice that killed me—you—damn it, you've got me doing it now! Or take a crack at that gyp doctor that started the trouble. But lay off me."

With that he turned off the light, pulled the blanket over his head and paid no further attention to the screeches and howls that made the night hideous for awhile. Presently he fell asleep, and the phantom, discouraged by the indifferent snoring of his intended victim, faded slowly back into nothingness.

JOHNNY WICKS had a very pleasant vacation, unmarred by another visit from his spectral double. But the very first night he was back in town, the phantom appeared once more, making his entrance as before.

"Now what?" Johnny wanted to know, glowering at the intruder. Then he noticed his ghost appeared a good deal the worse for wear. One of his eyes had been blackened and his nose pushed out of place. He carried one arm in a sling and the hand of the other one was bandaged. He looked as if he had been the chief loser in a free-for-all.

"I tried all you said to do," complained the phantom reproachfully. "It won't work. So you've got to bump yourself off after all. That's what I came to tell you."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. It was this way. I looked up the coot who pushed us off the platform. What a souse! That fellow don't ever go to sleep—he just passes out. He's haunt-

proof. Then I tried the subway. I couldn't work there, either. In the first place that station has four or five real ghosts on the job—suicides and lushes—that specialize in platform work. What I didn't count on was all the dead groundhogs and blasters. Around midnight the tunnels are crawling with 'em. Some roughneck wanted to know who I was and wanted to see my card. Then a Floating Delegate came by, checking up, and he told 'em I was a phoney. So they ganged up on me. A mortal can't hurt a ghost, but another ghost can."

The phantom exhibited his injuries.

"What about the quack doctor?" asked Johnny, getting interested.

"Oh, him? That was worse. All doctors, even the good ones, are bad haunt prospects because too many people die under their hands for one reason or another. But that guy is in a class all to himself. The amount of malpractice he musta done would burn you up. I went up there one night, but couldn't get near the place, the ghosts were so thick. They asked me what I had against the bird and I told 'em. You shoulda heard 'em laugh. Then they ran me off the place."

"Well?"

"I'm just telling you. I tried to get by without your help, but it's no go. Now you've got to do the Dutch. It's the only way out."

"Go chase yourself," said Johnny, pulling up the covers.

"Tomorrow night I get tough," warned the phantom, then vanished.

The ghost did get tough. He tried all the tricks of his trade, but none of the ordinary ones worked. So he settled down to a campaign of incessant, interminable talk. He showed up every night promptly at the hour of twelve and gabbled until morning. Where howling and chain-clanking or being smothered under filmy shrouds had failed to disturb Johnny in the least, the constant chatter began to wear him down. He had to listen, for the ghost, being an offspring of his own self, knew all his inmost secrets—the things that Johnny had half-forgotten and was willing to keep forgotten. He was prodded and taunted for every mistake he had ever made, and for every evil thought. That went on, night after night, for months, until Johnny Wicks was near the breaking point. He lost flesh by the pound, his hair grayed, and he took on the haggard, frenzied appearance of a man on the verge of madness.

"You look like a ghost," his boss said to him one day, and Johnny jumped as if jabbed with a bayonet. The very word ghost, in his jittery condition, was almost more than he could stand. He wondered dumbly how much longer he could hold out. He had rebelled from the first on the suggestion of suicide, but lately it began to have an appeal. But, as is common in most people, the tendency to cling to life was strong, so he cast about for some means of eliminating his pestiferous double self.

He read books dealing with phantasms. Though he found that there were approved methods of exorcism as regards many, there was nothing that was helpful against ghosts. Silver bullets could dispose of were-wolves, a stake through the heart would stop a vampire, garlic, crucifixes and other things were effective against certain classes of witches and demons. But man was helpless against ghostly persecution.

He complained to the police but the most helpful hint they gave him was that a short stay in Bellevue's psycopathic ward would do him no harm. Ghosts were out of their line. They couldn't be apprehended, or confined; bullets and blackjacks did not do them injury. Consequently, the police rule was to let them strictly alone. But they did recommend a lawyer who they said had had some success in such matters.

Johnny Wicks took the address and looked him up. The lawyer was not an imposing one. On the contrary he was a dried-up wisp of a man of great but indeterminable age.

"Hmm," he said, when Johnny had poured out his story. "Quite unusual, this. Haunted by your own ghost, eh? Most extraordinary!"

He pulled down a calfskin bound volume and studied its index. Then he shook his head rather hopelessly.

"During the Middle Ages," he said, "there were numerous court decisions relating to ghosts and the like. But in our time the courts have the tendency to throw such cases out. The complainant against spectral annoyance rarely receives assistance. Here, for example. In an action brought by certain citizens of Calder's Falls, Idaho, against the Western Sextons' Association to abate nocturnal noises in the town's cemetery, the court held:

" '—the defendant is in no respect liable for the behavior of ghosts operating upon his premises. Ghosts have repeatedly been held to be a species of *ferae naturae,* or wild beast, or wild and unaccountable creatures, without ownership and beyond control. Moreover, the tendency to haunt is a natural instinct with a ghost, and as such, in the absence of any statute specifically to the contrary, not an offense.' "

Johnny Wicks blinked. That did not sound helpful.

"That attitude is the common one," the lawyer went on to say. "Most judges would reject your case on the pretext that it does not fall within their jurisdiction. I am quite certain that should you attempt to obtain an injunction against your *own* ghost you would get nowhere. What he is attempting, of course, is a form of extortion, but it has been previously held that a man cannot blackmail himself. By extension, your own ghost, being a sort of *alter ego,* comes under the same rule. I am sorry, my young friend, but there appears to be nothing you can do."

Johnny sighed miserably. He was very tired and needed sleep badly. He wondered if it would not be wise to cut his throat and be done with it.

"However," remarked the old lawyer, shrewdly, "it follows that since you have no rights against the phantom, it also has none against you. You are perfectly free to deal with it as you choose."

"I know," said Johnny, hopelessly, "but how? You can't sock the thing, you can't pin it down, you can't outtalk it."

"Everything that ever lived is afraid of something," observed the sage old man. "What is your ghost afraid of?"

"Other ghosts," said Johnny, after a moment's reflection. "But I don't know any other ghosts."

"Think it over, son. There's your way out. Five dollars, please."

Johnny Wicks fumbled for the money, paid him, and staggered out. It was five dollars wasted; all he had learned was that he was trapped. His only release would be death. But at least he would not have to listen to the tirades of his nightly visitor.

THAT afternoon he visited a hockshop and bought a revolver. He took it home with him, loaded it and placed it on the table. Tonight was the night. He undressed, listless and numb, and fell onto the bed. Nothing mattered any more. He slept. Then, at midnight, there came the icy gust and with it his ghastly double.

"Do you remember the time . . ." began the ghost.

"Cut it," said Johnny, and snapped on the light. "You win."

He got up and picked up the pistol, whirled its cylinder and verified that it was loaded and ready to go. Then he faced the phantom. That time he was defiant, for a dazzlingly new idea had just popped into his mind.

"You win," he repeated, "but only the first round. In one minute I am going to blow my brains out. Then I'll be dead. That's what you want, isn't it?"

"Whatta pal!" exclaimed the ghost, beaming, "I knew you'd do the right thing."

"Okay. But wait. In a few seconds I'll be dead. Then I'll produce a real, honest-to-God ghost that won't look a thing like you—gray, thin, and older. Then I'll go straight to the L. P. A. G. and denounce you for the impostor you are. After that . . ." he paused for an ominous silence. The ghost quailed. "After that I'm coming back and going to rip that foggy hide right off your back. I'm going to take you apart, one bunch of smoke at a time, until I find out what makes you tick. Then I'm going to stop it ticking. Get that?"

"You can't do that to me!" wailed the spectre. "Ye-e-e-ow. Screee-e!"

"Watch me," said Johnny Wicks grimly, and put the gun to his temple. But he did not pull the trigger. The phantom was in a state of intense agitation, its nebulous substance writhing and twisting horribly. But it was steadily growing fainter, and in half a minute or so more it became quite invisible. Johnny slowly lowered the gun. Then he tossed it into a drawer with a chuckle.

"What a damn fool I've been," he said to himself. "I might have known that the best way to handle a blackmailer is to call his bluff."

Garden at Lu

BY GERALD CHAN SIEG

CINNAMON petals drop upon the air.
The night is still.
There is no sound but footsteps of the wind
Walking softly on a far off hill.
(*How dim the night and still.*)

All is the same: the ivy cool and dark
Against the moon-washed wall,
The little bamboo bridge, the sycamore
With branches lifted lonely, pale and tall.
(*How lonely, pale and tall.*)

Upon the pool the lily leaves encircle
A flower newly blown.
The long reeds watch the watered stars.
A golden fin goes gleaming and is gone.
(*How quickly it is gone.*)

All is the same. But you and I are changed.
We who knew light
And sunny laughter in this garden place
Are shadows moving in a shadowy night.
(*How dim and long the night.*)

Give me your hand. O let us softly move,
O softly move and slow,
Two shadows out of time who pause a while
To look on what we cherished long ago.
(*How many aeons ago.*)

The March of the Trees

By FRANK OWEN

Trees give fantastic help to a gardener who is their friend . . . an Oriental romance of love and life in a Chinese garden

DURING the Sung Dunasty, there dwelt beside the Yellow River in China, a poor man named Loo Siang who had dreams of grandeur. He was a famed gardener but all his possessions had been swept away by river floods. Twice his world had been washed away in this manner and patiently he had set about building it anew. Then came the third flood. This time it broke his spirit. It swept him away with it. In despair he journeyed to Soochow despite the fact that Soochow also had been attacked by the gluttonous river. Nevertheless he was drawn to Soochow because Soochow was noted for the beauty of its women.

Now with the few bits of gold which he still possessed, he built a small house. But when the house was finished, there came a mighty storm and a bolt of lightning struck it. In a moment it was in flames.

Loo Siang stood before it and beat his chest. He pleaded with the Fire Gods to spare his house. He sang gay songs to divert their interest. But they were absorbed in the fire and so heeded him not.

When at last the house was consumed and only charred ashes remained, Loo Siang sat down by the ruins and wept.

At that moment, it so happened that the Mandarin Zok Tsung was passing en route to the baths and he paused to enjoy the

Lari Kim, one of the thousand slave girls of the Mandarin, had enslaved him . . .

grief of Loo Siang. He called to his carriers to set down his sedan chair and then amid a vast amount of puffs and grunts, for he was very fat, he climbed from the chair and walked over to converse with the man of misery. He had recognized Loo Siang as the famed gardener who had so persistently been stalked by adversity.

Zok Tsung was interested. He owned much land surrounding his palace and he longed to have it made into a garden of rare beauty. But so far he had been unable to find a man capable of translating his wishes. His workers in the soil were little more than coolies. They flayed the soil, rather than attempting to cultivate it with reverence. And the soil was sullen. It refused to respond.

Now Zok Tsung was a crafty individual and when he beheld the gardener weeping in the ruins, he licked his lips as though in anticipation of a delectable meal.

He sought converse with Loo Siang who, in his desolate state, was of a mind to pour out his troubles.

"And now," he finished brokenly, "the gods must be laughing for they have crushed me until I lack even a few grain of rice for my evening meal."

Zok Tsung was voluble in his sympathy and he said, "Arise, and come with me. In this world we are all brothers and I should not enjoy my food were I to know that you were hungry."

As in a dream, Loo Siang walked beside the sedan chair of the Mandarin. He could not believe so distinguished a person was honoring him. Perhaps the gods were no longer laughing so loudly.

The Madarin's house was of a splendor to dazzle poor Loo Siang and he walked as in a dream as he was led to a magnificent room. His torn clothes were taken from him. He was bathed and dressed in garments of fine material. Then he was taken to a large banquet hall where food had been set the like of which he had never seen in all his existence. The meal lasted three hours and consisted of forty-seven courses. And as they ate, slender girls danced for them, girls as fragile as porcelain. On the air was a warm fragrance. And among these girls was Lari Kim, one of the thousand slave girls of the Mandarin. She smiled tenderly at Loo Siang and that moment he became as much a slave as she, a slave of the Mandarin, since to remain near her he would be forced to stay under the Mandarin's rule.

Zok Tsung smiled as he noticed the flames of passion kindle in the eyes of the gardener's heart. He was not angry, but pleased Lari Kim gave him the hold he needed on Loo Siang. She must be dangled before him like a tasty bit of roast pork.

When at last the feast was over and the dancing girls had departed, Loo Siang was in a pliable mood.

"I need a gardener," the Mandarin said slowly, "and I have come to the conclusion that you are the gardener I need. Work for me at good wages until you have accumulated sufficient money to buy a place of your own."

Loo Siang, thinking of Lari Kim, readily agreed to the proposal. Thanks to the generosity of the Mandarin some day he would again be a landowner, perhaps even wealthy enough to purchase the exquisite Lari Kim.

SO Loo Siang took up his new work and at once a change came over the garden. As he walked down the white marble paths there was discernible a gentle murmuring in the treetops. The trees were voicing their satisfaction over the new master of the flowers. And peace returned to the heart of Loo Siang who no longer mourned for the loss of his house. From the soil he drew strength even as do the plants and the trees. And now the earth became abundantly fruitful.

Occasionally Lari Kim, slender, fragile,

walked in the garden. Her eyebrows were arched moon-bridges; her smile so enticing that Loo Siang gazed upon her entranced. One night under the silvery sweep of the moon he took her into his arms. It was a night of dreams and love. Unknown to the Mandarin, they slept in the shadow of a willow tree while all the fragrances of the garden swirled madly about them.

Thereafter, life in that garden was more beautiful than ever. Lari Kim blossomed like an orchid, fed by the warmth of Loo Siang's love. And the years rolled on. Sometimes, reflecting over his lot, Loo Siang became philosophical. The gods had ceased laughing. He was no longer an object for derision.

So five years passed during which time Loo Siang drew not a copper coin for himself, letting his money accumulate until there should be sufficient for him to purchase a garden of his own.

But Zok Tsung, the Mandarin, was a conniving individual. He had no intention of permitting his gardener to leave him and so he summoned Loo Siang. He awaited him in the Room of Porcelain and he had arranged it so that as Loo Siang passed into the room he would cause a supposedly expensive porcelain vase to fall and shatter to pieces. The vase was really of trifling value but the Mandarin was loud in his grief. He bellowed and spat curses at the dazed gardener.

Loo Siang was without guile. It grieved him that anyone should lose a treasure through his carelessness, so he offered to pay for the vase out of his accumulated earnings. At once the Mandarin ceased his lamentations.

"It is but right that you should," he sighed. "Though even that will not reimburse me for my vase, the like of which does not exist in all the world. It is a priceless porcelain, worth many times the wages that are due to you. Nevertheless, I shall accept your offer. Now we are even. You owe me nothing; nor I, you."

And so Loo Siang was again penniless. Five years' savings had vanished with the shattering of a vase. In despair he returned to the garden. The flowers, aware of his grief, glowed more beauteously to distract his attention. The trees held out their branches to shield him from the heat of the sun. That day the voices of the birds were hushed. But in the night, Lari Kim came to him and slept in his arms. And all care slipped from him. When they awakened it was dawn and birds were singing.

Time wore on until twenty years had piled up like a mountain and always the Mandarin saw to it that Loo Siang remained in his debt. But now there were certain orchids developed by Loo Siang that had attained world renown. Merchants came from far and near to purchase them and money flowed into the garden in a golden river. It was then that Loo Siang rebelled. He declared he would produce no more orchids unless he shared in the profits. Reluctantly the Mandarin bowed to his wishes.

"Ten li from the city," he said, "is a large tract of land which I will turn over to you in lieu of wages. It is worth many times what I owe you, but I feel that you should be rewarded for your faithfulness."

Loo Siang accepted the offer with alacrity and said, "I have one last request to make of you."

"Do not hesitate to speak," said the Mandarin, "for I am your friend."

"I wish you would make me a present of the slave, Lari Kim."

The Mandarin meditated. "After all, why not? She is but a broken flower and fast growing old."

"She is magnificent," breathed Loo Siang.

The Mandarin eyed him shrewdly. "You are right," he said. "She has a lovely body. Broadly speaking, age does not ex-

ist except in a bewitched mirror that causes snow to appear in the hair. Take her, and welcome, but I feel that I should be reimbursed for so great a loss. Would it be too much to ask you to grant me one day of your time each week to care for my garden in exchange for a girl of such perfection?"

And Loo Siang said, "Gladly do I agree."

Early the next morning, Loo Siang and Lari Kim set out afoot for the garden which was to be their home. They were accompanied by a representative of the Mandarin to show them the way. It was a distance of twelve li but neither Loo Siang nor his lady minded that. The sun stilled its heat so they might not suffer. A gentle breeze accompanied them and on the breeze floated the breath of flowers.

At last they arrived at the site of the new garden, a barren desolate wasteland. There was not a tree anywhere in sight. Once more Loo Siang had been tricked. This parched strip of desolation which would take a century to cultivate, was his. For this worthless heritage, he had given the best years of his life.

Lari Kim put her soft arms about his shoulders.

"After all," she murmured, "I am still with you."

THAT afternoon they sat alone in the squalid hut which was the only habitation within miles. They had eaten the food which the servants of the Mandarin had packed for them. Until it was night they wandered over their domains. There was plenty of land, plenty of dead earth. It was a graveyard of hope.

"Something might be made of it," he mused, "if only there was a spring of fresh running water."

Even as he spoke, he noticed a small trickle of water breaking through the hard soil at his feet. With a cry of surprise, he fell upon his knees. With his bare hands he dug and pushed the soil away until the spring widened. For years Loo Siang had spoken to the earth as though it were his friend. Now as a wedding gift this spring was given unto him by the soil. Perhaps the spring had always been there and it needed but the help of human hands to break through. To Loo Siang there was nothing supernatural about its appearance. He prayed to many gods so it was not odd that one among them should answer his prayers.

That night the moon rose in a blaze of glory. It painted the hut with its silvery light until it seemed like a palace. And Loo Siang sat by the door of his house, holding Lari Kim in his arms, chanting love songs to the moon.

Hours later when the moon had set and blackness once more held the countryside in its grip, strange things began happening. It was the Black Night of Terror that has been told about in Chinese legend for a thousand years. The earth trembled as though it were spewing up poisons which it had swallowed and could not digest. Monstrous forms appeared upon the highways near Soochow. Men who beheld these frightful forms uttered shrieks and fled to their homes. All the terrors conceivable had broken loose that night. Merchants closed their shops and went to hidden places to pray to the gods for mercy. The wine taverns were deserted. Terror gripped the land. And all night long the highways were crowded by these silent, monstrous forms. It was not true as some believed that they were dragons. It was not true that they breathed forth fire. It was not true that they snatched up tiny men and women and devoured them as they strode along. All these things were partly imaginative. For all those dark, grim forms were really trees. That queer night of terror was caused by the march of the trees. They were marching from the garden of the Mandarin to the barren desola-

tion which was the domain of Loo Siang. The trees refused to remain any longer in the garden of the Mandarin after their beloved gardener had gone. And as they strode along, in their branch arms they carried the flowers—orchids, roses, chrysanthemums and peonies—which were too fragile to make the journey afoot.

In the morning when Loo Siang and Lari Kim awakened, they were awed by the spectacle that met their vision. During the night their slumbers had been undisturbed because the wind blew all noise away from them. The wind guarded their sleep.

Loo Siang walked along the flower paths. He recognized every tree, every flower that nodded to him as he approached. He knew that all these flowers and trees had come from the garden of the Mandarin, nor was he surprised, for to him every flower, every tree was a vital, living, breathing friend.

And he took Lari Kim in his arms and said, "The gods have been good to us."

But in the palace of the Mandarin utter consternation reigned. All night he had lain in terror, surrounded by his women, pleading to unknown forces that his life might be spared. But now it was morning and he was still unharmed. His cringing courage returned to him. He stalked into the garden.

It was a frightful sight. Not a tree, not a bush, not a flower remained. He could not believe his eyes. He summoned every one of his thousand women. Not till each of them had corroborated the fact that the garden was empty was he willing to give credence to it. But where had the trees gone?

Then from one of his spies came word that all the trees now flourished in the desert garden of Loo Siang. The Mandarin did not stop to consider how they had gotten there. He was engulfed by fury. His face was purple. He summoned his carriers and climbed into his sedan chair.

When he reached the garden of Loo Siang, the gardner met him, bowing profusely. His face bore a bland expression.

"Where are my trees?" cried Zok Tsung.

Loo Siang extended his arms. The trees were all in the same relative positions that they had held in the Mandarin's garden. When the march of the trees had ended, each tree had dug its feet once more into the soil for a long, long period of rest.

"I shall have your life for this!" cried the Mandarin. "In this land my power is absolute. You shall be destroyed."

Loo Siang gazed at the choleric Mandarin and smiled. The gods were on his side. His friends were the trees, the flowers, the sun, the soil and the wind. With these as allies in the approaching fight, what had he to fear? All the Mandarin had was pomp, the power of position, men and money. It would be an unequal battle.

And Loo Siang said slowly, "For twenty years I was your slave, taking your orders, a victim of your treachery and trickery. Now things are slightly changed. Here, I am the master. It is now my turn to give orders. Get out of my garden!"

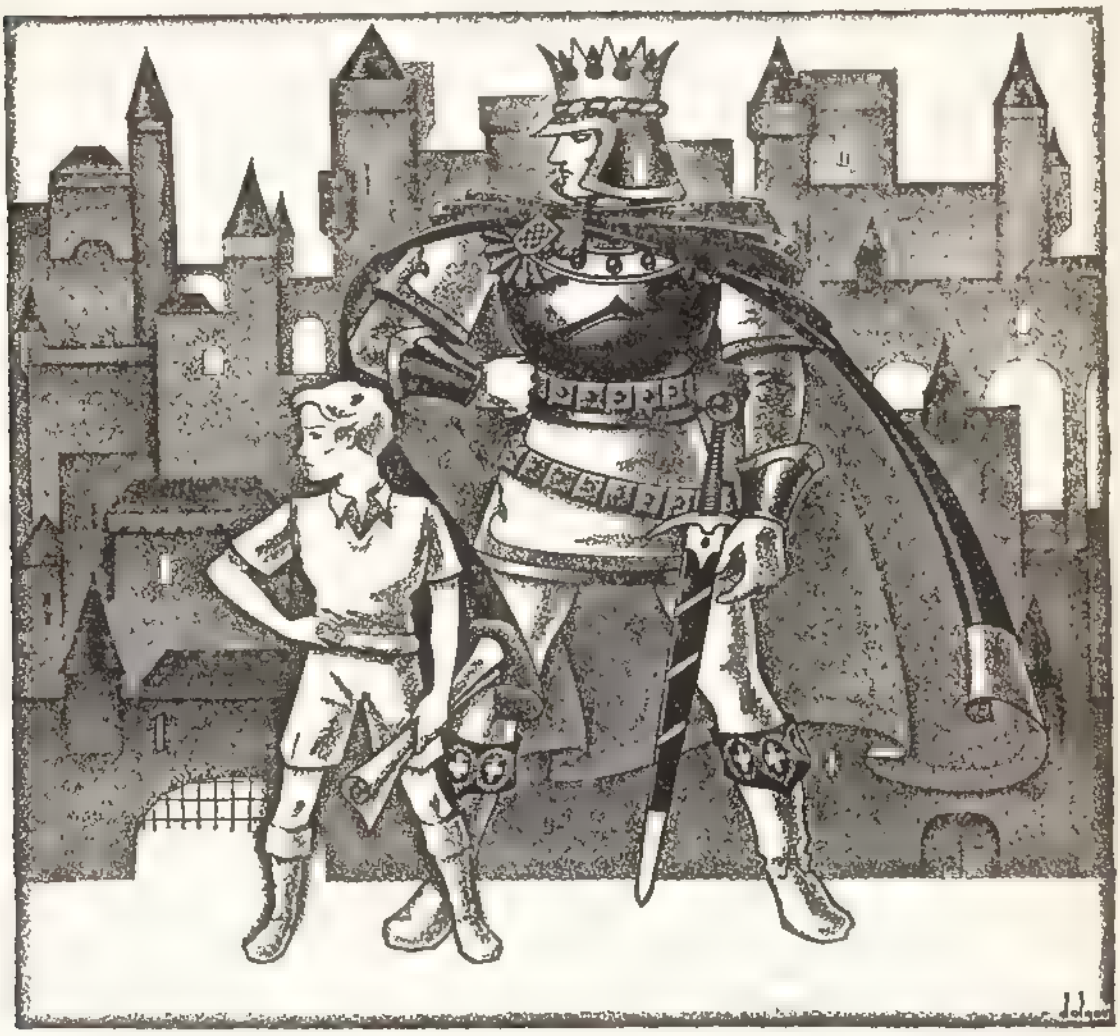
The Mandarin was speechless. He was fat and flabby. He was not a match for Loo Siang in personal combat. He regretted that he had left his four carriers outside on the road.

"Remember," he thundered, "though I go now, I shall return."

It was a vain boast for even as he left the garden, a tree fell upon him and he was killed.

Throughout Soochow there was little sorrowing for the Mandarin, Zok Tsung. And among all his thousand slave girls, not one wept.

By ALICE MARY SCHNIRRING



Child's Play

Fantastic, horrifying is this tale of the "boy king" whose empire was his drawing-board!

HENRY bent lower over the drawing-board as the twilight deepened. With a dark-red crayon, he filled in the outlines of another city; then, with a pen dipped in India ink, drew —rapidly and with remarkable delicacy and skill for a twelve-year-old—a temple, a palace, and a barracks; and sketched in hastily some ambiguous dwelling places. He muttered to himself as he worked.

"This'll keep old Charley Anderson in his place, I bet," was the tenor of his mumblings. "His barracks only have room for about two hundred warriors, and my Royal Guards can clean them up with one hand tied behind their backs. Anyway, the

Thorvians are a bunch of sissies." In large letters, he labeled the city "THORVIA," and sat back with a little smile on his face, wiggling his fingers to uncramp them.

A voice called from somewhere downstairs. "Hen-reeee. Hen-reeee! Your dinner is ready! Why aren't you ever around to help me set the table or anything, instead of sulking up in your room all the time? Why—" the voice trailed off into peevish, whining incoherencies. The boy stood up, scowling; but prepared, laggingly, to go downstairs. He paused, however, for one more look at the map.

It was drawn with remarkable precision. It appeared to be a map of a mountainous country, dominated by one large city, built on the top and upper slopes of the highest of the mountains. This city, marked "DRACO," was elaborately and painstakingly developed with the little India ink symbols. A truly magnificent palace was at its very heart; and around the palace, cunningly enough, were strong barracks, each with a watch-tower. Beyond these, again, was a very wide, bare, circular road, completely surrounding barracks, palace, gardens and all. Apparently the ruler of this kingdom had a healthy distrust of his subjects, or else expected, but was prepared for, an invasion.

The remainder of the map bore out the second theory; for Draco was the heart of a whole system of smaller cities, or states. Since each city had a palace (though none as impressive as the one in Draco), the effect was that of a feudal overlord, surrounded by lesser rulers. So, in fact, was the case. Henry, who dragged out a dreary existence with his aunt and uncle—an existence complicated by the limp which he would always have, as a souvenir of the accident in which his mother and father had been killed—had found that in order to make life with the other boys of his age bearable, he would have to make himself superior to them. Since any physical superiority was out of the question, his quick mind had found the way out.

As Kirwan, ruler of Draco and its subject states, Henry held a position of unquestioned authority among his fellows. More—the game had captured their imaginations to such an extent that former, and possibly healthier, pastimes were neglected. Billy Daniels (Fiero, Prince of Maglar); Donny Clark (Andrus of Ghuria); Joe Domenico (Horvath of Balcur); and Robin Johnson (Duke Shira, of Friya), lived only for the campaigns against the Dog-Men of the Outer Mountains, the internecine wars that troubled Draconia with scarcely a let-up, and, of course, the political strife that was one of its chief raisons-d'etre. In turn, each one had tried to out-maneuver Henry; but Kirwan, King of Draconia, had maintained his power against each of them, and his ascendancy over their minds at the same time. "The game," however, held even more sway over Henry than over the others. More and more, his life as Henry Booth seemed the game, and a very unpleasant and dull game, at that; while, as Kirwan, he lived in a dangerously brilliant world, of which every corner was twice as familiar to him as the drab surroundings of his Aunt Martha's and Uncle Joe's house.

Aunt Martha and Uncle Joe were not fond of Henry, to start with. He didn't act nicely at *all* to their dear little Charley (about to become ruler of Thorvia); and Charley such a bright little fellow—and so healthy! Imagine—100 pounds, and only eleven years old!

That, of course, was one way of looking at it—the Anderson's way. Henry's way was, quite simply, that Charley was a big overgrown slob of a boy, and a nasty little sneak and bully besides. Henry's views were actually far less biased than those of his aunt and uncle. In fact, the only reason for the creation of "Thorvia" was that

Charley had prowled, and sneaked, and opened bureau-drawers, and listened in corners to too good effect. Briefly, Charley knew too much, and, in his inimitable way, could break up the game with dreadful ease—but even his calculating, disagreeable little mind recognized its pull, and a Dukedom was the price of his co-operation.

ALL this passed vaguely and hastily through Kirwan's mind, as he lingered in the doorway, still under the spell of his own creation. It was Kirwan who frowned, standing there, foreseeing trouble with his latest vassal-lord; it was Kirwan who suddenly went back to the drawing-board, took up the India ink again, and quickly sketched something in the south-eastern corner of Thorvia. But it was Henry who dropped pen and ink, nervously and ran to the door and down the stairs, at a repetition of the whining cry, "Henreeeeee!" from downstairs.

He sat through an unattractive meal of boiled potatoes, cabbage, and a very poor grade of chopped beef, topped off by a bread-pudding that was mostly bread. What raisins there were, went to Charley; who had also engulfed the lion's share of the chopped beef. Quantity, not quality, was his motto; and glands alone were not responsible for the hundred pounds that were Charley.

The meal was enlivened by Aunt Martha's monologue, mostly based on Henry, and never complimentary to him; with variations on Charley's virtues and good, healthy appetite—so different from Henry, picking at his food, as if he shouldn't be grateful to his dear auntie and uncle who provided his food, at what expense no one knew; and look how Charley likes to play outdoors—not always frowsting in his room, when he wasn't in corners with those other boys—and just what was it they did, anyway? Aunt Martha thought that she and Mrs. Daniels and Mrs. Clark and Mrs. Domenico (though Mrs. Domenico was not really a lady, to Aunt Martha's way of thinking, though doubtless a good-hearted woman), and Mrs. Johnson ought to get together and find out just what was going on. You didn't see Aunt Martha's Charley—

Panic, that had been growing in Henry as this speech rose to its crisis, flowered into speech.

"It's—its's just a club, Aunt Martha," he stammered, rashly.

"Just a club!" she sniffed. "And what kind of a club is it that is too good for my Charley?"

Henry's panic subsided. This emergency had already been faced, and dealt with. He even smiled.

"Why, we elected Charley a member at the last meeting, Aunt Martha," he said, looking at Charley. Charley's face, which had worn a greasy, knowing smile, suddenly took on a look of surprise, mingled with disbelief. He stared at Henry.

"Ya did?" Astonishment and—yes, pleasure—even normal, little-boy pleasure, characterized his tone.

"Yes, Charley. You're a full-fledged member of—the club, now. Tell you about it after dinner."

Aunt Martha was not going to give up quite so easily, although it was easy to see that she was mollified.

"Well, I want to know more about it before I let Charley join, anyway," she said firmly. But Uncle Joe, for once, stood up to her.

"Now, Martha—boys' clubs are secret. Can't expect 'em to tell you about what goes on. Leave the kids alone."

"Well, I can trust Charley," said Aunt Martha, fondly, giving in at last.

"I know Mother's little man wouldn't belong to any club that wasn't nice."

Charley smiled, as unpleasant a smile as Henry ever remembered seeing, even on

Charley's face, and replied in a sick-sweet voice, "Yes, Mamma dear."

They rose from the table, and Charley grabbed Henry by the arm and pulled him outdoors, into the spring night.

"Hurry up!" he said, feverishly. "If ya didn't mean it, I'm gonna tell everybody the whole thing. Didja mean it, really? Have I got a kingdom of my own in Draconia? What's its name? Where is it? How big—"

Henry was Kirwan. "Quiet!" he said. "My lords and I meet in conference tonight. You will be inducted into our company as Duke of Thorvia. As is our custom, you may choose your own name by which you will henceforth be known to us in Draconia. Be ready at midnight." Shaking his arm loose from the fat, wet grasp of his newest Duke, King Kirwan limped away down the street.

At a quarter to twelve, Kirwan, King of Draconia, sat in the palace in the heart of Draco, his principal city, surrounded by his liege lords, the Prince Fiero of Maglar, Prince Andrus of Ghuria, Prince Horvath of Balcur, and Duke Shira of Friya. All of them looked troubled; Fiero and Shira downright furious.

"Kirwan," spoke up Fiero, "I crave leave to speak."

"Speak," said Kirwan, not looking up.

"I like not this new dukedom. It bounds Maglar all along my northeastern border, and this new Duke is a trouble-maker."

"And a slimy louse," said Duke Shira, fervently. "As the only other Duke of this company, one who has not yet attained his Prince-ship, I respectfully plead, O Kirwan, that you make him less than a Duke. I would not be akin to him even in title."

Kirwan looked up, finally. It was noticeable that his eyes blazed with excitement, mingled with a look of uncertainty. "Am I not your liege lord?" he said, though not angrily. "And do you not trust me?"

"We trust you, Kirwan," said dark-eyed Horvath, who had not spoken before.

"But we know thisa new Duke is trouble-maker. We can control heem in Draconia, yes—but outside?"

For a moment, Kirwan hesitated; then he spoke slowly and hesitantly. "I think—I think I can control him outside, as well. I have a plan—"

The new Duke of Thorvia, Edric by name, was proving a trouble-maker. And Kirwan's liege lords, who had expected this, but believed that Kirwan could handle it, were becoming mutinous. First, Edric had shown a tendency to ridicule the whole secret life of Draconia; but after a couple of weeks, he had become as absorbed by it as the rest. Then, however, the greed that was the cornerstone of his whole character, had begun to come to the fore. The marvelously intricate details of the whole country—the peasant's huts, the different uniforms of the fighting-men in the service of each ruler; their number and character—even their names; the strange flowers in the garden of the palace at Draco; the unpleasant call of a certain bird found only in the unexplored woods of Guria; and the revolting characteristics of the pale fawn-colored mink-like animal that the Friyans had tried, unsuccessfully, to exterminate; Edric, with a surprising quickness, had learned them all, and even added to his fellow-lords' knowledge.

WHAT puzzled Edric, sometimes (or, rather, it puzzled Charley Anderson) was the fact that it did not seem to him that he invented the things. It seemed rather as if they had always been there, in the back of his mind, and had just come casually to the fore. Even more strange—and when Charley thought of it, he was uneasy; although to Edric it was more a sullen annoyance than a surprise—was that Kirwan knew still more than Edric and, once or twice, had corroborated Edric's descrip-

tions with certain amendations—*which Edric somehow realized were correct.*

There was the night when Horvath had entertained them in his palace at Balcur. The Dog-Men had been quiescent for some weeks, and conversation was idly turning on the swamp-lands in the southeastern corner of Thorvia, unfamiliar territory, except for such features as Edric's palace, the barracks, and the peasants' huts, to most of the group. Edric was saying, "There must be mineral springs underground in the swamp. It—it sort of churns around, sometimes; but not always in the same place."

Kirwan had a small, secret smile on his face. "Not always the same place, no," he agreed; "But I think you will find always the same *sort* of place."

"Whatta you mean, the same sort of place?" Edric demanded, puzzled; "The whole swamp is the same sort of place. And I don't know why I should have to have a swamp in Thorvia—nobody else has. And this one has a nasty smell, somehow." He stopped short, realizing with an unexplained thrill of fear that it *did* have a nasty smell. But how could it have? And —how did he know it, and know that he wasn't "making it up"? His mind was so absorbed by this rather frightening problem that he almost missed Kirwan's answer.

"It only—er—churns around near those dark-purple waterlilies, doesn't it?" said Kirwan, mildly; yet with a gleam of almost uncontrollable excitement in his eyes. "What?" said Edric, and thought. "Yes," he said, and then with more conviction, "Yes. Only by the purple flowers." Then, jumping up, and with his voice shrill, "Why? What is it? You know what it is. How do you know?"

Kirwan cast down his eyes to the map, which always he took with him to the meetings. "Why, mineral springs, as you suggested," he answered. "That's what makes the swamp smell, probably, too. As for its only being near the flowers, why, it's the other way around. The flowers grow there because there's some quality in the springs that feeds them."

Edric was almost satisfied with this explanation. But back in his bed, later that night, Charley Anderson still lay awake, and thought, and thought. And his thoughts came to fruition a week later.

It was in the middle of a discussion at the dinner-table—the usual discussion of why Henry wasn't eating his lambstew, but this time flavored with the unusual spice of the fact that Charley was only picking at his.

"It's that dratted club of yours," pronounced Aunt Martha. "It's got to stop. You, Charley, you've been mooning around the house now almost as bad as Henry, for goodness knows how long. Just what is this club, anyway?"

Charley cast a side-long look at Henry, who was looking at him with a strange expression—a waiting sort of look. Charley squirmed in his chair, uneasily. "Oh—it's just a club," he answered, sullenly; "Ya can't tell about it while you're in it. But they haven't been treating me right, and I think I'll resign—and then, Mamma, I'll tell you all about it." As he spoke the last words, he looked straight at Henry, with a sly, triumphant expression, that said even more plainly than words, "See? I have you in a cleft stick. Either you knuckle under to me, or—"

Henry looked back at him, with an unreadable gleam in his eyes. Or was it Kirwan who looked back at him? Charley —Edric—found himself unable to decide, but something made him say, quickly, "Of course, if they're nicer to me, I won't resign—and then I couldn't tell."

"There, Henry," said Aunt Martha. "I *knew* you were being mean to poor little Charley. You're jealous of him, that's what it is; because you're a cripple and he's a big strong, clever boy. Either you

treat him right, or I'll break up that club of yours—and I mean it!"

Henry looked at his plate. His nostrils flared, but he said absolutely nothing for a minute. Then he looked up, his expression imitating perfectly that of a twelve-year-old boy who, while still sullen, has been forced into following a course of action repugnant to him. "Oh, all right!" he said. "We'll fix Charley up so he won't kick." And under his breath, he added, "Ever again."

That night Kirwan worked late with his fine-pointed drawing pen and the India ink. And when he had finished, the false dawn was just breaking; and showed, as he switched off his light, the addition he had made to his map in the southeastern corner of Thorvia. It was beautifully executed; a sluggish, somehow oily-looking creature. Drawn to the scale of the map, it was very large—in fact, almost half the size of the swamp itself. It had a disgusting appearance, and was so clearly limned that one could almost see it move. Henry had a distinct talent. He slept, then, with the little smile that had become almost a fixture, on his face.

"KING KIRWAN," said Duke Shira, "I crave the help of some Draconian fighting-men."

Kirwan's eyebrows shot up. "So? Are not the Friyans content? Surely you do not expect trouble with your people?"

"No," said Shira. "The people are content, except for one thing—the woods are becoming increasingly full of khalders, and —you know why we must keep them down."

Kirwan nodded. Andrus of Ghuria, who had a tendency toward squeamishness, gulped a little, and looked unhappy, since the khalders, those pale fawn-colored animals that looked something like weasels, had habits that were better not thought of.

"The only thing is," said Kirwan, slowly, "That I have reason to believe I will need all my fighting men shortly. Why not ask Duke Edric for some of his forces?"

All eyes turned toward Edric, who sat, fatly, in his chair, with a smug smile. "Sure," he said, pleasantly, "I'll let you have half of them. But—I need more land, an' more influence. In fact, I think Kirwan ought to take over Thorvia, and I'll take Draco—and, of course, whatever goes with it."

The only one apparently unmoved in the middle of the resulting turmoil was Kirwan. "Quiet!" he said, loudly. And under the influence of his voice, they actually did quiet down.

"I have been expecting this," he said, unconcernedly. "But I am prepared for it. Edric—" he turned toward him suddenly. "Have you been down to the marsh lately?"

The fat Duke of Thorvia stirred uneasily. "What's that got to do with it?" he demanded. "Anyway, it's your headache now—Draco has no marsh," and he giggled. "And either I get Draco, and rule the whole bunch, or—you know."

"Know what?" demanded Fiero truculently. But Kirwan held up his hand.

"He means he'll destroy Draconia by—well, exposing it to the light," he said, indifferently; almost with amusement at his own joke. "But—Edric, have you noticed that the dark purple waterlilies have all withered?"

A peculiar look came over Edric's face. "What of it?" he asked, shrilly; "What's that got to do with it?"

Kirwan smiled. "Why, I would suggest that after we disband tonight, you go down to the swamp and—maybe you'll find out why it churns. It might not be mineral springs, you know; and it would be interesting to find out what else it could be—wouldn't it?"

Edric's face looked ghastly. "I won't! You can't make me!" he cried.

"I won't go near it!"

"You have to sleep," suggested Kirwan, still smiling. The others looked puzzled and frightened, but Edric looked dreadful. "I won't sleep!" he screamed. "I won't sleep!"

When they broke up, he was still muttering it.

At five o'clock in the morning, Kirwan sat up in bed. A look of anticipation, a listening look, was on his face, making it strangely unpleasant. His attic room was directly above Charley's large, airy bedroom; and sounds traveled upwards fairly plainly. An anomalous sound was reaching his ears now—a wet, squelchy, crawling sound. Suddenly, he heard a terrible cry.

As the sound of running feet, crying voices, and finally a dreadful scream from Auntie Martha, reached his ears, Kirwan turned over and went to sleep, smiling.

The Wood-Wife

By LEAH BODINE DRAKE

IN A hollow oak-tree
I live by the wood,
A bit more than human
And much less than good.

I've queer spells, potent spells,
That I went to learn
To the goat-hooved and shaggy ones
Who hide in the fern.

The good-wives, the house-wives,
They shudder at my sin:
But much they'd give to learn to weave
Cloth of spiders'-spin!

My pet fox, my russet fox,
He ravishes their geese:
Yet none dare call out the hounds
If they would know peace!

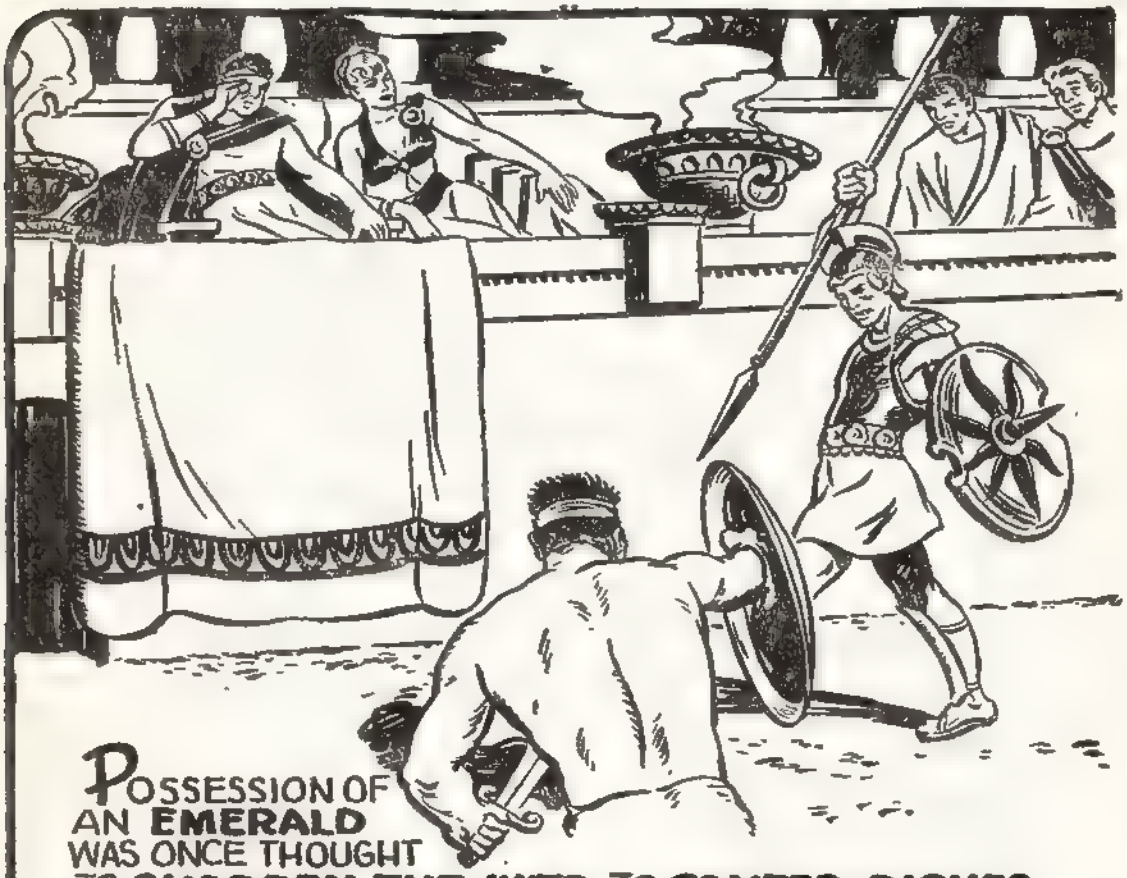
On a day of falling leaves
I met the young Squire.
I gave him a sidelong look
That set his face afire.

The bonny young Squire,
He dreams in a spell;
But not of golden curlylocks
Of Parson Jones' Nell—
But of red hair, and green eyes
That have looked on Hell!

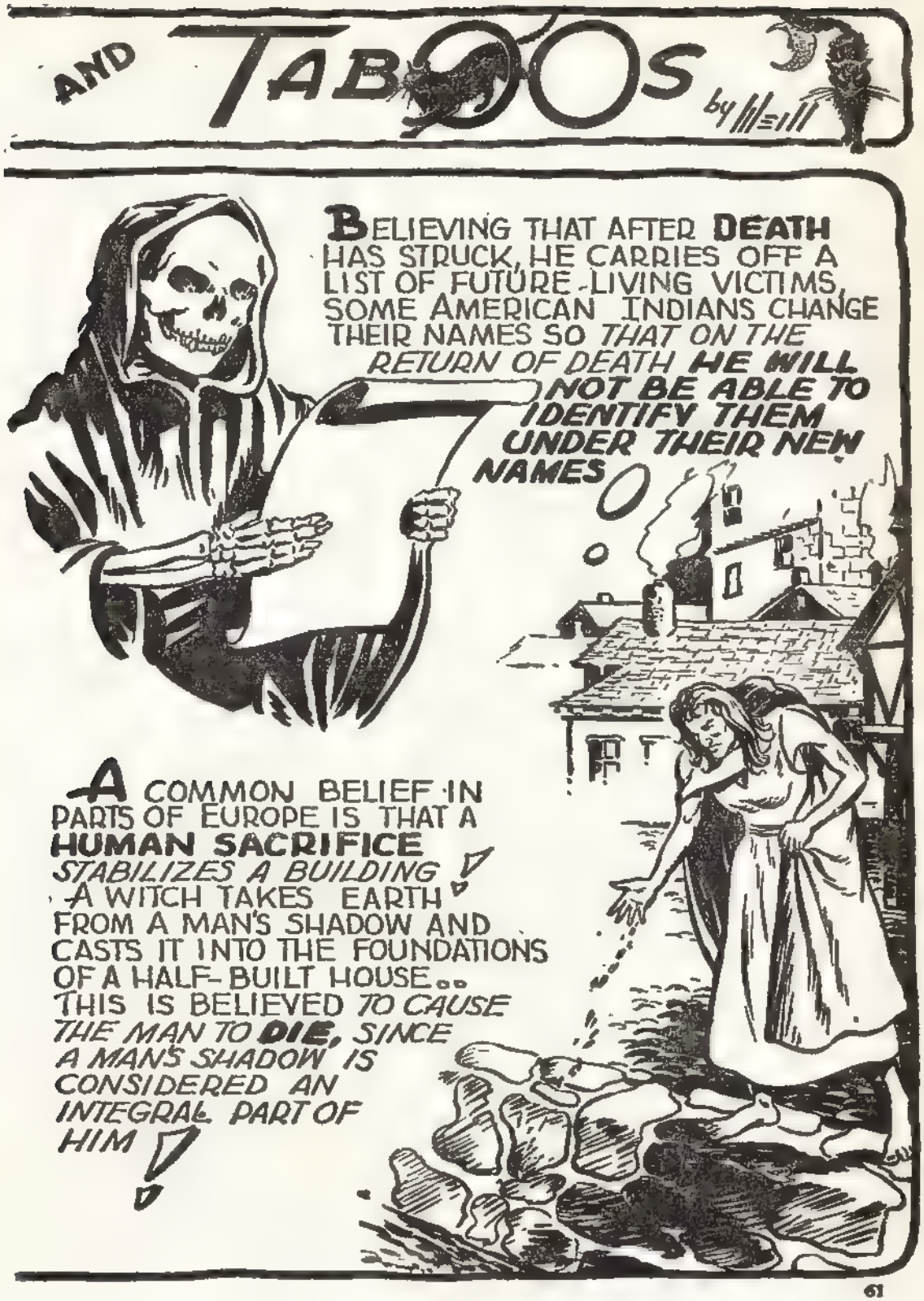
Dream, pretty Squire-kin!
It's small use to burn!
For when the moon is up
The wood-wife will turn

Three times widdershins,
And greet where you stood
The shagged-men, the satyr-men
Who creep from the wood!

SUPERSTITIONS



POSSESSION OF AN **EMERALD** WAS ONCE THOUGHT *TO* ***SHARPEN THE WITS,*** *TO* ***CONFER RICHES*** *AND, WHEN PLACED UNDER THE TONGUE,* ***TO GIVE THE POWER OF PREDICTION;*** THEY WERE ALSO BELIEVED TO HAVE ***GREAT THERAPEUTIC VALUE*** *AND FORMULAS FOR THE* ***CURE OF POISONING*** *BY SWALLOWING THE POWDER OF THIS GEM WERE PRESCRIBED AS LATE AS THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY!* WATER IN WHICH AN EMERALD HAD STOOD WAS SUPPOSED TO CURE ***INFLAMATION OF THE EYES*** *AND NERO IS SAID* ***TO HAVE WATCHED GLADIATORIAL CONTESTS THRU AN EMERALD BECAUSE OF ITS RESTFUL HUE***


AND TABOOS by Hill
BELIEVING THAT AFTER DEATH HAS STRUCK, HE CARRIES OFF A LIST OF FUTURE-LIVING VICTIMS, SOME AMERICAN INDIANS CHANGE THEIR NAMES SO THAT ON THE RETURN OF DEATH HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THEM UNDER THEIR NEW NAMES
A COMMON BELIEF IN PARTS OF EUROPE IS THAT A HUMAN SACRIFICE STABILIZES A BUILDING ! A WITCH TAKES EARTH FROM A MAN'S SHADOW AND CASTS IT INTO THE FOUNDATIONS OF A HALF-BUILT HOUSE.. THIS IS BELIEVED TO CAUSE THE MAN TO DIE, SINCE A MAN'S SHADOW IS CONSIDERED AN INTEGRAL PART OF HIM !

The Rat Master

By GREYE LA SPINA

What could they mean, those soft rustlings and pattering that had nothing to do with the leaves—nor with the rain, though rain was falling?

THE night was pitchy dark; the sky indigo. Black vaporous racks flitted across the moon that could be glimpsed only occasionally through rifts in the interlacing branches of the crowding trees. The rutty roadway had become a rude cattle trail, along which I urged Carry with ever-increasing anxiety, although upon what my apprehension was based I myself did not exactly know.

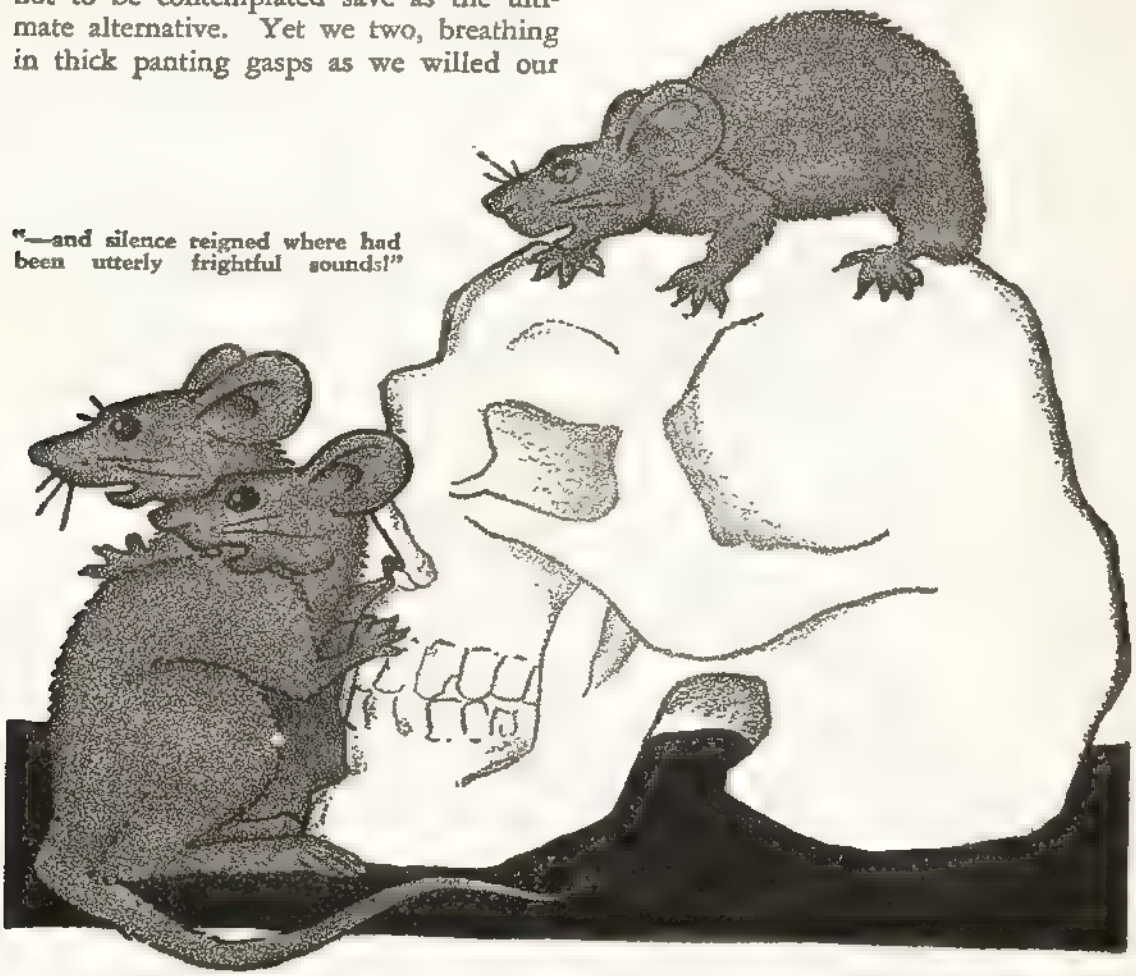
Once in a while I used the electric flashlight; oddly enough, not to make surer our panting way along the hardly-used trail, but to lighten my furtive glances into the creeping shadows that lurked about us, not only galloping fast upon our heels, but pressing closer on either hand while giving way with suspicious readiness ahead.

"The horridly unveiled creature danced in ugly glee—"

Carry, good little sport, leaned more and more heavily upon my supporting arm. Her high-heeled pumps (chosen for motoring, not for that scrambling, hasty flight over rough, rugged trails) continually tripped her; she turned her slender ankles more than once, with faint ejaculations of impatient dismay. That she was at the point of exhaustion I intuitively sensed, but I dared not let her realize my awareness of her condition; instead, I managed to jerk out occasional words of encouragement that would lead her to believe I thought her capable of far greater effort than yet remained in her fragile body.

That we must continue on our arduous, struggling way, Carry realized as well as I. Night in that thick, unfriendly wood was not to be contemplated save as the ultimate alternative. Yet we two, breathing in thick panting gasps as we willed our muscles to repeat, time and time again, the same expansions and contractions that resulted in our slow forward movement, were facing the fact that night had come on apace under cover of those thunderous and gloomy canopies of darkness which an approaching storm was hanging across the lowering sky.

Go back we could not if we would, for by now I knew that I could not have found my way back to where we had abandoned the car, when it refused to travel farther. Yet I would have been glad to have felt it possible to return; with plate glass windows properly fastened up, we would have had the semblance of a refuge about us, whereas now we knew not how long we must stumble forward in the fast-gathering



"—and silence reigned where had been utterly frightful sounds!"

darkness, ignorant of what lay before us, even while we fled from what we instinctively felt was pursuit closing in with inimical intent.

Most of all things terrifying to the human soul is the intangible. It is not that final terrifying apparition that freezes the blood in one's veins. It is the slow turning of the knob of one's chamber door in the eerily still hours before dawn, when one knows that he is alone in the house and that no other human being can possibly intrude upon his guarded solitude. So now those creeping, silent shadows drew ever closer upon Carry and me, while we clung to each other, slipping and stumbling along the narrow trail, lighted scantily now by sparkling fireflies that flashed more and more thickly as we went on.

"Jack—I—can't—go—farther."

Carry collapsed against me heavily, the faint words jerked from her panting lips. With difficulty I held her from the ground, clasping my arms desperately about her half-fainting body tightly, and trying still to urge her along. My efforts were vain.

"You *must* try again, dear. You can't stay out here all night. It is beginning to rain. You'll be drenched if we stay here. There must be a house of some kind nearby, or there wouldn't be this definite trail, poor as it is."

The pattering of heavy raindrops on the carpet of dead leaves had been faintly discernible while we were moving along. Now that we stood still we heard them more plainly, although after a moment they ceased entirely. In their stead there came from the murk about us a soft rustling, a faint stirring. Then I observed what had escaped my notice until that moment. The fireflies that had been flashing on either side of the trail were emitting their lights only in doublets, as it were, and none were flying higher than a few inches above the ground. Strange fireflies, these. Something about them struck a bizarre note that was highly unpleasant.

"Jack! The fireflies—?"

Carry had observed it also. Her frail body was trembling in my arms with an agitation not altogether that of physical exhaustion. All at once she pulled against my encircling arms with unexpected violence.

"Let us go on, Jack! Oh, we must go on! Fireflies emit a yellow light, and these are a livid green. *They are not fireflies.* What are they, then?" Her voice sank to a faint, scared whisper. "Jack—the rain—*it wasn't rain,* Jack."

Powers above! She was right. What we had taken for pattering raindrops had been the delicate drumming of feet, the feet of an innumerable horde of small animals, so tiny that their eyes, sparkling with strange green light, were but a few inches above the carpet of dead leaves over which they ran. *What could they be, that walked when we walked, stood when we stood?* My body twisted in a shudder of involuntary horror and distaste. My teeth went suddenly on edge. I could feel gooseflesh coming out on my skin.

"Courage, sweetheart! There must be shelter near at hand. Come, lean on me, and try again."

CARRY withdrew from my supporting arms and once more addressed herself to the arduous efforts her exhaustion had but a moment since obliged her to abandon. Fear whipped her nerves and her muscles into momentary action. As she stumbled onward with me, she moaned under her breath.

"Jack—I'm—dreadfully—frightened."

"Nonsense, dear. Nothing to be afraid of," I lied boldly, but I was listening, ears suddenly keener for every night sound.

I heard that soft rustling and pattering all about us, *that was not rain;* my eyes shrank from the flashing of innumerable

tiny sparks of green *that were not fireflies.* A shiver of nausea and distaste caught at my shrinking flesh and I had much ado to quiet it that Carry might not catch the contagion of that involuntary horror from me.

There was something afoot on another plane that had impinged somehow upon ours; this much I knew intuitively. There was a gathering about us in those dark groves of creatures that in some secret fashion were interested in us; whether their will was potent for good or evil only time would show. I felt a sickness within my soul, that bade me beware; it told me that the interest our strange escort had betrayed in the movements of us two night wanderers boded ill.

I could feel the body of my little sweetheart sinking more and more heavily. I caught her against me yet tighter, and heard her faint, despairing whisper.

"Dear—Jack—I told you—*he* would never—let me escape."

Her hopeless tone filled me with a fury that momentarily gave me fresh strength. Dwight Harkness should not have her body again, to use in his vile incantations; he should no more suck the lifeblood from her delicate arteries.

"He can have nothing to do with anything here, dearest. We have left him miles behind. He can hardly have learned yet that you have fled. Lean on me, little love. I shall be strong enough for two."

"I—cannot—take—another—step."

Carry went into a shapeless heap at my very feet, and I was obliged to stop and lean down in order to get that slender little body up into the shelter of my arms. As I stopped, and leaned, the sound of drumming feet about us died away, and it seemed as if it began to be quiet close to us, and then little by little grew quiet afar off, as if the escort of creatures in the shadows were indeed an army that stretched through the woods and into the far distance all about us.

"No use—Jack dear. Leave me. Save —yourself!"

(Oh, she would say that to me, my heart of gold!)

"And what would my life be without you, little love? If you cannot go with me, I stay here with you."

"Jack—dear—you are—truly good. For your sake—I will try—again."

I helped her to her tired feet. The soft rustle of her rising was echoed and prolonged all about us. As she staggered weakly up, I flashed the electric torch quickly to left, to right. Shadows. Black shadows. Thick, dark, ugly shadows. None else visible. Nothing moved but those portentous blots of night that lurked and seemed to leer on every side. Or was it not they which moved? Perhaps it was the owners of the eyes—?

"Don't try to talk, darling. Spare your breath for this last effort. We *must* find shelter of some kind near at hand."

As if the necessity behind my words had evoked an answer to my inward prayer, the path took a sudden twist. We rounded the curve, and oh! the joy of seeing dim lights ahead.

"Here is a house, dear. Courage! Only a few steps more and we shall be under shelter."

WE GAINED the hovel. It was too mean to be termed a house or a cottage, but it was shelter of a kind; it had a roof and four walls, two blank and dirty windows that seemed to permit a pale light to filter through into the night darkness. I rapped at the door imperatively. At the sound of my knock, the rustling about us ceased and such a silence wrapped us about that almost I could have desired to hear once more that drumming and pattering of unseen thousands of tiny feet, the rustling and stirring of myriads of living creatures in the night about us.

Then, as if my knock had been a signal,

the door flew open to us, and simultaneously the windows went blanker and the light that had seemed to emanate from within was gone. Carry dragged at me, unavailingly.

"No—no—no!" she was crying in terrified, choked gasps. "It is a trap. I tell you, *he* will not let me escape. Now he will have us both!"

Her exclamations died away suddenly. I picked up her slight, unconscious body and stepped across the threshold, at the same time directing the rays of the torch into the interior of the hut, for it was little more than a hut. It was entirely empty. I thrust the door shut with my foot, then stood holding Carry against my heart while I listened.

Silence. Heavy silence, thick with portent. A kind of panic seized upon me. Again I threw the brilliant ray of the torch about, to find nothing save a door opposite that by which we had entered. Reason told me it could only lead out of the hut again, for I had seen at a glance that it was but a rude shack. For the moment, then, I dared forget the slowly growing murmur without, as if millions of tiny animals were whistling and chirping and squeaking together in an ever-increasing, evil chorus.

I let Carry's body slip gently to the rough board floor, ripped off my coat and cushioned her dear brown head upon it. Then, standing the lighted torch upright beside her, I set to chafing her cold fingers between my own warm palms. I had taken the precaution to kneel in such a position that the door by which we had entered could not be pushed open, being blocked by my own body. As to the rear door, I dared not for the moment take time to see if it were secured or not; first I must bring consciousness back to my poor darling who lay white and still upon the floor.

It was as her eyelids fluttered open that I leaped to my feet, seizing the torch from the floor, for it was my only weapon. Too late I remembered that I had left my automatic in the door-pocket of the car when we abandoned it. I stood before Carry and faced the opposite door now; turned the light upon it, my nerves jumping in an ecstasy of horrid anticipation. For I had caught the slight creaking of the rusty hinges. Now I saw the turning of the knob, and the inch-by-inch widening of the opening that would presently admit—*what?*

Behind me Carry cried out and struggled to her feet, that she might meet whatever was to come bravely, standing. My game little Carry! How my heart yearned over her.

THE door slipped yet wider with reluctant creakings and then remained motionless, perhaps four inches open. My nerves (none too good after the tramp through those haunted woods in the attempt to snatch my little sweetheart from the man who called himself her guardian but of whose dealings with the Evil One she had for long had no doubt) could not brook that silent and ominous waiting.

"Whoever you are, enter!" I shouted furiously. "Either come in or go out!"

The door swung obediently wider. My heart almost missed a beat. Leaning against my left shoulder now stood my little love, breathing in short, quick gasps.

"You ask me to come in?" said a voice, with incredulous intonation. "I had hardly expected a welcome."

"Either get in or get out!" I snapped. "And be quick about it."

"I accept your kind invitation," said the voice, on a curious high pitch, somehow reminding me of the twitter of mice under the flooring.

"It's all wrong, Jack!" breathed Carry's soft whisper into my ear. "You shouldn't have asked—*it*—in. It is evil. I feel strongly that it is evil. Had it been good, it would not have waited for an invitation."

Hastily the voice repeated, "I accept your unsolicited invitation."

The owner of that high, squeaking voice appeared so suddenly in the narrow aperture of the doorway that almost I started back in consternation. A noisome odor made itself known as he came in.

"Shut that door behind you," I ordered, feeling that my own voice was not as even as I would have liked it to be. "There's something unpleasant abroad tonight, and there's no sense in asking it inside, too."

The only response of that ragged mantled, dwarfish creature was a shrill titter. At the sound of it Carry quailed; one of her delicate little hands took hold upon my arm so tightly that her finger nails pinched through my shirt and hurt me so that I winced involuntarily.

I STARED at that strange visitor, holding the bright ray of the electric torch steadily upon him. The gray mantle shrouding his crooked, stunted body was drawn across his face as if to shield his eyes from the too-bright glare of the light; it effectually concealed from me what manner of man he might be. Unprepossessing, beyond doubt, if I were to judge from that wretched, shrill voice of his, so like—Powers Above, so like the high, twittering squeals of rats in their foul holes. As that ghastly thought possessed my brain, I turned my eyes cautiously in their sockets without moving my head, and met the frozen stare of Carry, leaning weakly against my shoulder.

"Who and what are you?" I demanded sharpening my tone as I once more focussed my gaze upon the intruder.

"A poor wanderer, seeking shelter from the storm and night," squeaked the newcomer. Again that high, irritating titter, for all the world like mice in the wainscoting.

"Jack! Let's go on! Anything would be better," began Carry, shrinking behind me.

"Hush, dear. It would be folly to attempt going on in the darkness, and with that army of creatures outside. Sit yourself down, strangers, on your side of the room. Carry, rest on the floor, on my coat, dear. I'll keep watch. This storm will pass, as must the night. And then the things outside will surely depart and we can go on."

Obedient, if reluctant, Carry sank down behind me in the corner.

The gray mantle of that other wanderer seemed to have grown wider and longer, for when he also sank to the floor against the opposite wall it was large enough to envelop him completely, so that to the casual eye nothing was discernible but a heap of dark cloth tumbled together in a raggedy huddle. Not so much as the faint motion caused by breathing could be distinguished when I turned the electric torch upon that heap of dark garments, and I turned it there occasionally during the next dragging hours, although most of the time I kept it in my hand, focussed upward so that it would cast its illumination over the entire interior of the hovel.

Carry slept well, from sheer exhaustion. I myself felt more wideawake than ever, for much might depend upon my wakefulness. I had looked at my watch and was just slipping it back into my pocket after noting that it was almost four o'clock, when a sound without the hut galvanized me into action, bringing me to my feet with a snap. I put the light on the third inmate of the hovel, but the pile of dark garments yielded no sign of life. The sound without was that of human footsteps that came unevenly as if the walker were uncertain, in the murky night, of his path.

No other sound had broken in upon the silence of the long night, save the soughing of heavy gusts of wind among the treetops and the occasional swoops of the gale bursting down upon our rough refuge. Once, indeed, when I had chanced to give a swift

and unexpected glance at the huddle of garments in the corner, I could have taken my oath that from its midst a keen, bright eye peered sharply at me with a kind of constant watchfulness that made me grit my teeth together involuntarily with the shock. The intent, sly gaze of that misshapen being slumped against the wall held in it more than a suggestion of the unpleasantly bizarre and bordered all too closely on the furtiveness of some foul denizen of another plane which should never have ventured across its own border into material existence.

Again those uneven, wavering footfalls without, sounding distinctly upon my straining ears between the blows the swirling wings of the tempest hurled at the frail hut, that rocked and shuddered at each fresh impact. My harried gaze fell once more upon the third occupant of our refuge, and again I saw the glitter of a partially shielded eye, that gleamed like a wild creature's green reptilian orb out of a thick, black night.

The wanderer who shared the hut with Carry and me was alert, in spite of his huddled and shapeless appearance; his readiness held for me a hidden significance that I strove in vain to penetrate. That it carried a concealed threat I knew instinctively. I felt about it an emanation as of obscene, silent laughter at the impotence of creatures weaker than he. This stranger who had entered the forest cabin upon my inadvertent invitation was more than he seemed to be upon the surface. Twisted and deformed of body as he appeared to be, about him I felt the steady purposefulness of well-aimed and knowledgeful power, potent for good or ill as he might will.

Well had Carry's guardian planned, when he permitted her escape with me. We had been obliged to flee in the only possible direction, through those haunted woods, since his wild country habitation was so situate upon a rocky ledge that only by going through this thick wood could we eventually regain the highways of civilization.

Thus securely had old Harkness hidden himself and his vile magical practices from the cognizance of mankind. I told myself bitterly, as I listened to that groping footfall without, that Carry was right; I might have known it had I not chosen to be blind. That bitter and vindictive old man would not permit her to escape. He let her think she was escaping, so that her final recapture into hopeless slavery might destroy in her the last clinging vestiges of hope that her love for me, her faith in me, had so far maintained within her. By trapping me also, he would destroy her finally with devilish completeness.

IN MY mind I cursed the sheer nervous stupidity which had made me take the wrong turning, the fatal assumption on my part that my gas meter registered correctly. Had I been a bit more careful, we could at least have returned to the crossroads and there gained the right turning that led out of this thickly wooded wilderness onto the main road that would have taken us out of this strange and portentous country. We would have had enough gas to have lasted us to the nearest village. I blamed myself only, for Carry had clung to me with implicit faith in my ability to extricate her from her terrible position that she had given not a single thought to the details of her escape.

Yet—I threw a tender look at her quiet form, her dear brown head pillowed on my coat—she would be better off to die whatever death might face us together, rather than to perish in the midst of some vile incantation, soul-victim perhaps as well as body-victim, to that villainous old man who had been sucking the life and personal will out of her by his evil magic. As I

looked down at her she stirred; her eyelids fluttered open.

Her face was still rosy with the flush of dreamless sleep. So great was her confidence in me that she had slipped off into heavy slumber without a misgiving. She met my gaze with a smile, a courageous smile that wrung my heart, for I knew we had only begun our struggle with powers and forces about which I could as yet make only faint surmises.

"Jack, dear, is it morning yet?"

My eyes jerked away from her, for the torch had reflected a sudden sliding and metallic beams of light from the huddle of dark garments across the room, and I knew that the stranger had moved at the sound of her voice. Without taking my eyes from the being which shared our refuge, I answered her in a cautiously lowered voice.

"Dear, someone is lurking outside. I've been hearing light footfalls in the pauses of the gale."

Carry sat up quickly, and I could imagine without seeing it the expression of dismay that was passing over her sweet face.

"Jack! Oh, dear God, it is *he!*"

"Nonsense! It is only someone caught in the storm, or lost, just as we and our friend over yonder were."

"No—no—I feel that *he* is near."

Her agitation stirred me. I would get that stranger outside, at least.

"Time you wakened and got out of here, my man!" I exclaimed. "The storm is dying away, and I'm not at all sure that we want more of your company."

The huddle of dark garments stirred into motion. The being within them got to its feet with a lithe but abnoxious synchronism of muscles that made my nose wrinkle in distaste, for it was more the easy movement of a wild creature than the balanced grace of an athletic human body. For a moment, as he arose, he rested on feet and hands like a beast, and there was something especially sickening to me in that momentary posture, although it almost immediately changed to an upright position. The slate gray of the ragged mantle still concealed the stranger's features, but two piercing and scintillant eyes glared fixedly upon Carry and me from that carefully maintained shelter.

"I am to go, eh? And why? You asked me in, didn't you?"

A sickening voice he had; a voice that went off into an occasional squeak; a sharp, uncontrolled animal sound.

"I rather fancy it is daylight without," I said irrelevantly, and gave Carry a hand to help her to her feet. "These windows are so soiled with dust and cobwebs that very little light filters in, but my watch says it is nearly five o'clock. The sun must be coming up by now."

A high tittering laugh filtered from behind the gray cloak.

"You are taking a high hand," said the stranger, his shoulders shaking as if in silent mirth.

"We were firstcomers here," I retorted sharply.

"Ho, ho, ho! But you see, this happens to be *my* house," explained he, and his sharp little eyes flashed and sparkled disagreeably.

I did not reply at once, but listened keenly for those groping footfalls that had affected me so unpleasantly a few minutes ago. Although the wind had died down with the closer approach of dawn, I heard them no longer.

Carry touched my arm timidly.

"Let's go, Jack. I—I'm afraid to stay here."

Our host laughed and chuckled to himself, or perhaps at her naive admission.

Then, "Outside," said he abruptly, "are all my children. They were called here. They are waiting now to be fed."

He stared at us, eyes glinting cruelly.

God knows, there was nothing in the bare words he said to make my flesh

shrink, my lips draw back tightly against my teeth in sheer loathing, but Carry's fingers, squeezing into my arm, told me that she, too, had received the same horrid impression.

"Open the door, if you wish, my dear guests. Perhaps then you will choose to remain inside here."

I RUBBED the filthy pane of one window vigorously with the sleeve of my discarded coat, which I had retrieved for the purpose, but without helping out the situation much, for the glass was scratched and marred as well as vilely dirty, and I could not see clearly through it. There was no help for it. In spite of that shrouded being's veiled menace, I must risk opening the door to see what threatened from without.

Cautiously I tiptoed to the door of our last night's entry, lifted the latch slowly and carefully, my foot behind the opening door that any sudden rush from without might not fling it wide. As I opened it a crack, I applied one eye to that small point of vision and stared. Then I jerked the door to, my hands trembling with the icy cold of nervous shock, and stood, back against it, breathing hard.

"Jack! Jack! What was it?"

"Carry, I am afraid I have dragged you into something as horrible as what you thought you were escaping from. My imagination fails to conceive what it may be, but you were right, my poor little love, about your guardian. He is a potent magician indeed, as well as a vampire and a devil," I cried out bitterly.

Carry's hands clutched at me frantically.

"But what did you see outside? What did you see? Was it—*he?*"

"No, he is not there. At least, I did not see him."

"Then what—what has so shocked and changed you, Jack?"

"Carry darling, outside this wretched hovel there are—literally thousands of rats sitting waiting everywhere I could see. Ugh!"

My teeth had gone on edge as my mind roved among the horrid possibilities of our situation. And like a fool, like a stupendous fool of fate, I had left my automatic in the car pocket! It would have offered us an alternative, at least, to whatever horror threatened us now. Oh, was ever a would-be knight errant more asinine, more criminal, than I? From the ghastly fate that had threatened my little love under the roof of her "guardian," I had snatched her, only to expose her to as horrid and disgusting a death as the mind could conceive and retain sanity.

Across the room the mysterious being rustled and chuckled and jeered and jerked in ugly, loathsome merriment.

"They will stay, will my guests. Ah, yes, they will stay—for as long as I will let them. Ho, ho, ho!"

"But we shall not be obliged to submit to suffering your presence here," I shouted suddenly moved to swift action, for it seemed to me that I could no longer breathe the same air that this vile creature was polluting.

I sprang across the room, throwing off Carry's small restraining hand as I leaped, and flung myself upon the disgusting huddle of noisome rags that shrouded that sneering being. I met the impact of my hands upon his throat only to feel his muscles tighten to an iron tautness that told me immediately that my strength was puny in comparison to that which I had so madly defied. The creature made no returning gesture of physical violence, but appeared rooted to the spot with a steady immovability upon which my own athletic fitness broke as a powerful ocean wave breaks and disintegrates upon an implacable cliff of adamant.

Carry's cry of dismay and despair gave the final touch to my mounting apprehen-

sion. I cursed myself for an impotent fool, as I felt my fingers slowly losing their grip upon that steel which they had grasped beneath a dwarf's rags. My eyes left the devilish keen contempt of that creature's shining orbs to see, the other door opening with a swift movement, and the entrance of a fourth human being into the hut. It was old Harkness himself, and as he entered my straining ears caught the milling from without of those thousands of rats that were waiting—waiting—waiting—with such hideously confident patience.

At his entrance, the being whose throat I had grasped gave himself a quick shake, and I slipped weakly from him, while he seemed to have expanded in potency so that the power emanating from him made his very physical semblance more lofty, straighter. He turned to Harkness, burning eyes that were still shielded by his upheld mantle, disregarding as if we meant nothing in the scheme of things, Carry and myself.

"So you have called my children," he stated rather than asked, and his squeaking tone held accusation.

Dwight Harkness wasted but a bare scornful look at Carry and me. He drew his form to its full height, and he had once been a man of noble and commanding mien before he had degraded mind and body by vile magical arts.

"You dare resent my action?" he said, scowling until his prominent hooked nose almost met the beard that clothed his chin luxuriantly in snowy white, giving him the false semblance of a noble patriarch.

"Resent?" Our host uttered a high, tittering laugh. "I? Ho, ho, ho! It is not *I*, it is *they*, who resent the calling. My children are hungry. They wait without. You called them for your own purposes only, to drive these—" —and he gestured indifferently in our direction—"—into your power again, that you might once more assume possession of a soul and body that you have found useful in your work."

"And if I have?" steadily replied the other, holding himself with high dignity.

"Ho, ho, ho! You omitted to provide food after the calling. My children are waiting, and they are hungry; *very* hungry," squeaked that voice with soft emphasis.

CARRY'S slight body slumped against my arm. I shook her a bit harshly to bring back active consciousness, poor child, for it was no time to lose one's wits when our fate was being decided by two as foul beings as ever drew God's fresh, sweet air into their polluting lungs.

Dwight Harkness threw out one hand in an impatient yet curiously placating gesture.

"I will send them away again," he said scornfully. "I need them no longer."

"And you really believe you can send them away? And you think they will go?"

The piercing orbs of the dwarfish creature lighted suddenly upon my face then, with a kind of devilish mirth a-dance within them.

"You, young sir, who have brought your sweetheart to this sorry pass, shall have a chance to atone for your indiscretion. The girl shall live. She shall return to her guardian's protection. But my children without must be fed, if they are to let her pass free among them."

A ghastly silence hung heavily upon the hut's gray morning murk. The meaning of those words was only too clear. Carry would be permitted to return in safety to her guardian's laboratory, if I would give myself to the famished vermin waiting with such devilish patience without. God, could a man contemplate such an alternative and not shrink from it?

I uttered an involuntary groan, for with the sacrifice of myself, Carry would be riven of all human friendship, cheated of all hope of human succor. It was this, I

swear, which held me in bitter dread and resentment at that moment.

"Jack! No! Rather let us both go to face the rats!"

My brave girl! My lovely sweetheart! I took her outstretched hand firmly in mine. We met together, the eyes of that Evil Two.

"I cannot go, leaving her to that devil in human form," I protested, oddly enough to the dwarf. "Better that she should be food for the rats, than lose her immortal soul under that man's vile practices. Open the door! We are going out there together."

My flesh shrank sickly, but I knew it would not take long, for they were many which waited without. Carry's eyes sought mine; upon her white face rested a curiously contented smile that gave peace to my heart.

"It won't take long, Jack, will it?" came her whisper faintly.

I could feel her trembling against me. Inwardly I was groaning at the horrid thoughts that assailed me. Her tender flesh at the mercy of those sharp, slashing teeth; the swarming vermin pulling her down while she shrieked in involuntary agony. And then I could not bear it.

"I will go alone," I said roughly, twisting from her tight grasp upon my arm. "God will not let her soul be raped from Him. That, at least, He will save from the wreckage you would make of her delicate body. I am going. Take her into such safety as you can offer," I shouted at Dwight Harkness, and my hand flew to the door latch.

"Unusual. Most unusual," murmured the high, penetrating voice of the dwarf from his mantle, almost with approval. His greenly glittering eyes rested upon me in keen appraisal. "But my children are hungry. They are very hungry. And this young man is too athletic to be plump and tasty."

Across the room Harkness pounded in triumph, his eyes under their beetling brows bent upon poor Carry, who had lifted her small face heavenward in God knows what agony of desperate invocation. He laughed sardonically as he seized upon my little love's frail wrist, and jerked her toward him.

"Let that fool out to feed the children," he commanded in brutal merriment. "I cannot go through them carrying this girl, unless they have their—occupation," he finished ironically.

"You have forgotten your spells? Ho, ho, ho, chief master of magicians!"

There was a something subtle in the dwarf's voice that gave me pause even while my nerveless but determined fingers were lifting the latch that would let me out to my doom. I turned slowly, met something in those piercing eyes that was neither venomous nor vindictive, and hesitated.

Dwight Harkness, upon whose left arm hung the now limp body of my poor little sweetheart, turned also, with something of dark wonder and amazement on his heavily lined countenance.

"Am I not master?" he demanded heavily.

"Have you not staked your soul upon the acquisition of your occult secrets?" countered the dwarf.

"Then send that fool yonder to feed the little ones without, so that I can pass without more loss of time and without being obliged to resort to spells. I brought none for this wench."

I lifted the latch with intentional rattle, but without removing my gaze from our host's guarded visage.

"I cannot send him. You should know that. He must go of his own free will, driven by fear, or hate—or love. He is ready, old master of thread-bare magic." An insulting titter.

"You are insolent!" hissed old Harkness, in a rage.

"I? Insolent? *I?* Ho, ho, ho!"

With a flash of fiery and resentful anger, the old magician turned and struck at the dwarfish figure. Whereupon, as if that act had been sensed, if not actually witnessed, by the horrid myriads, without, a deafening clamor of squeaks and shrill squeals set up about the hovel, that was only silenced by the uplifted hand of the dwarf, who had not stirred when the other struck at him, but who had somehow evaded that blow without visible effort.

"It needed only this, oh, foolish magician! You were sworn to serve me loyally if I in turn gave you my aid and let you call my children at your will. But you have forgotten that when they come, they are hungry and expectant. Ho, ho, ho! Open the door, young lover, and stand aside. Open it wide!"

God knows how I sensed that it meant good, not ill but something in his voice, in the sparkle of his shrouded eyes upon me, the glitter of them upon that evil old mage, made me obey. I opened the door with a sweeping gesture, and then turned my back upon the inevitable rush, for it seemed to me that none of us would be able to survive the assault of those thousands of greedy beasts without.

How it came to pass I do not know, but there was I standing with Carry in my arms, and about us was draped the shrouding mantle of that strange being into whose domicile we had wandered. He stood off, a bent and horrid creature, whose uncovered face showed him to be but a travesty upon the human form divine. God, it was of such a horror, so bestial, that I thanked my Maker Carry was unconscious.

If ever a human being resembled a beast, it was that one which leaped and laughed, and waved short pudgy arms as it danced its dance of ghastly death about the shrieking, fear-possessed magician, shorn now of his former power. An enormous, unshapely rat it seemed, erect upon hind legs, wreaking vindictive vengeance upon that hapless and miserable man whose pride in his magical arts had led him into overt rebellion against a being which must inevitably have been superior to him in evil power.

Through the open door poured a living torrent of squealing, squeaking rats, teeth bared as they fought and tumbled against their prey, piling in, wave upon wave.

"Save me! Spare me! I meant no harm!" screeched old Harkness, quailing in panic.

I could do nothing, for the beasts had hemmed me into the corner, and I could only strive to maintain my footing, shrouded as Carry and I were in the rat-like dwarf's gray mantle, at which those wild, squealing vermin sniffed, only to leave us entirely untouched. Incredible, nevertheless, they surged and battled about our corner, leaving it as clear as they left the space about that dwarfish being who had ordered me to give them entry.

"I've waited, like my children, you fool! I've waited," snarled the horridly unveiled creature, and danced and pranced in ugly glee. "I knew you would over-reach yourself one day, my master of forgotten secrets. At him, my little ones! At him, my children! He will not call you again, to send you away unfed. He has forgotten his spells. He cannot hurt you. At him, my children, at him!"

"But—I am master—master of the rats!" gasped Harkness, the devastating knowledge of approaching doom settling upon his agonized features as he brushed down first one, then another, of the rats that began to spring upon him and climb upon him from the tumbling torrent still pouring in at the doorway.

"You? Master of the rats! Ho, ho, ho! You commanded only because I permitted you, thrice-besotted fool! I—I—*I* am the Rat Master!"

God be thanked, Carry remained limp against my breast, and I gritted my teeth

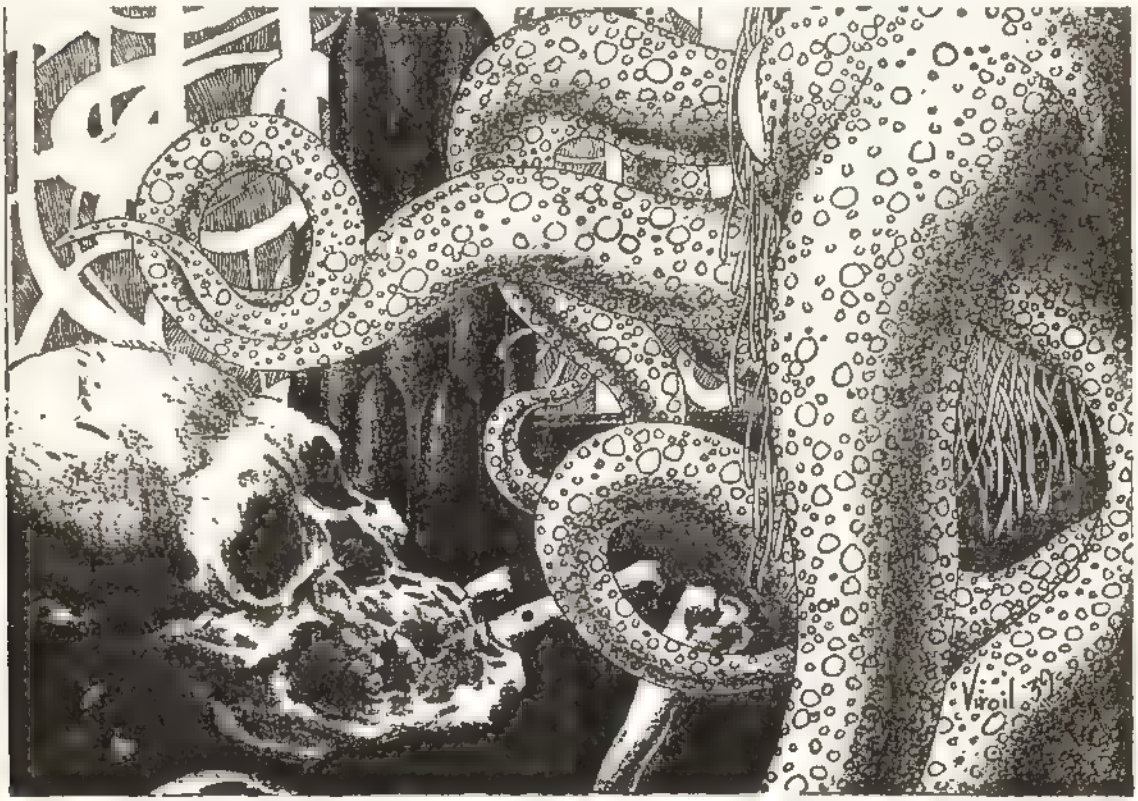
in the vain effort to control my jumping and agonized nerves, lest I begin to shriek like a futile echo the shrill screams that were issuing from the reddening lips of that doomed magician of evil spells. I closed my eyes, but imagination created such horrid reconstructions of that dreadful scene that my quivering nerves gave me no relief, even when all ceased as suddenly as it had begun. Silence reigned, where but a moment before had been the most utterly horrible sounds.

THEN, only then, did I dare open my eyes. Upon the ground lay clean picked bones, white and glistening. Torn scraps of what had once been seemly garments lay scattered over the rough wooden flooring. No sign of rats or Rat Master. Nothing but we, ourselves, just as we had entered that hut. It might have been a dream, but for those white souvenirs of an evil man's fitting end. The gray mantle with its nauseating wild animal odor had been stripped from us. Carry hung on my arm, against my breast, her eyelids flickering, and I knew returning consciousness must not find us within that place, where her eyes would seek and find confirmation of the dread reality.

I strode without the doorway.

The sun had risen. The woods that had seemed thick about us that previous night had now shrunken to a sparse growth that barely hid the vista of highway, but a few hundred feet ahead of me. On the edge of the highway stood a car that I knew. It had been the property of the late Dwight Harkness, of unlamented memory.

Holding my little sweetheart safely to my heart, I went down the trail briskly to light and freedom and peace.



Strapped to the shoulders of the winged man was diaphanous air-gear that flashed back the sunlight in colored glints and sparkles . . . a tale of the far Future!

The Treasure of Red-Ash Desert

By STANTON A. COBLENTZ

I

LA-GLO stood on the third parapet of the Balcony of the Sun, and looked out over the Amethyst City. She was a slender young woman, with the sparkling black eyes, the coppery-golden skin, the deep auburn hair characteristic of the People of the Later Dawn. Her head, as was usual among her kindred, was long and large and was dominated by a gleaming spaciousness of brow; her clothes were simple, and consisted only of a wavy sky-colored robe reaching to her bare knees, a

pair of sandals, and a filmy wisp of a cap above her thick flowing tresses.

As she gazed down from the third parapet, La-Glo saw nothing but the familiar array of lavender-tinted towers, with purplish cupolas and spires and colonnades of amethyst, interspersed by trees, and by gardens where rainbowed fountains splashed and rivulets trickled. Far in the distance shone the blue Ocean of the West; while just to the rear rose the barren snow-tipped mountains of what, to the unknown aborigines hundreds of centuries before, had been southern California.

For a moment La-Glo bent her gaze on the men and women who, dressed in green or pink or lilac or light-blue, paced just beneath her along the Avenue of the Golden Lilies. "Ah, when will he come? When?" she murmured to herself; and searched with her keen eyes the sunlit blank of the sky. Then her attention was caught and held by a series of shifting colored lights which broke out on a wall across from her. To the child of an earlier civilization, they would have meant nothing; but to La-Glo these moving rays were pregnant with meaning.

"Sons and daughters of the Amethyst City, take notice!" she read. "The Grand Sholite, ruler of our glorious land, announces a project to interest all enterprising youth. We People of the Later Dawn, after thousands of years, have built a civilization of which we may be proud. We have read the secrets of the atom and of the galaxies; we have sent our explorers careering to other planets. We have mastered the mystery of matter, and drive our motors with energy from the sun; and, most important of all, we have tamed the evil forces in the heart of man, and have learned how to live at harmony with ourselves.

"But, for all our knowledge, there is one thing we do not know. We have not been able to trace our own descent. We have learned, indeed, that our remote ancestors were ape-creatures; but between the ape and civilization there is a Missing Link, which was neither all beast nor all man. That he lived for thousands—even hundreds of thousands of years—may be taken for granted, for his bones have been found embedded in successive geologic strata; and evidences of his crude strivings for culture have been discovered in the shape of bits of broken glass and pottery, and inscriptions that no one has ever been able to decipher. Scientific investigation has long been hampered by old traditions, which tell us that the Missing Link was evil, and perished in a blast of self-inflicted flame, and that all who dig among the ruins will be contaminated. Yet we must have descended from him, half-brute though he was; hence it is now time to lift the evil over that grim phase of pre-history."

La-Glo turned from her reading long enough to cast a searching glance into the deep flawless blue of the heavens; then looked back at the colored lights.

"In the Red-Ash desert to the south," the notice continued, "many evidences of the Missing Link have been dug up. The Grand Sholite therefore announces a competition for youth. He who puts forth into the desert, and in the third part of a year returns with the trophies casting most light on our beast-forebears, will be personally honored by the Sholite with the Purple Badge of Merit—than which there is no greater distinction."

A GLEAM of desire came into the eyes of La-Glo as she read these words; and her thin little lips tightened with sudden determination. Then once more her gaze searched the heavens—and this time she let out a little pleased cry. High in the distance, darting toward her with rocket speed, a little black dot was visible. With almost incredible velocity, it drew nearer and lower, appearing first like a bird with

outspread wings, then gradually taking on a human semblance. When it had come within half a mile, it suddenly slackened its speed, remained poised almost stationary like a humming-bird with swiftly vibrating pinions, then slowly and gracefully descended.

To La-Glo there was nothing unusual in this spectacle of a winged man—one with his flying apparatus attached to his shoulders and reaching out on each side like the wings of Icarus. The diaphanous air-gear, rapidly pulsating and flashing back the sunlight in colored glints and sparkles, was as commonplace to the girl as the amethystine pavement on which she walked. But what caused her heart to beat fiercely was the sight of the tall young figure who, alighting gracefully as a butterfly near the railing before her, checked the sun-motor, stripped off his wings, and advanced with both hands outstretched.

"Kannu!" she cried, as she sprang forward and took his hands. "I knew you would come!"

"La-Glo!" he greeted her, his large dark eyes burning softly out of his coppery-golden countenance. "The ocean was wide, the trip to my kindred of the South Islands a weary one. But I knew you would be waiting. It is good to be back. When, now, may I claim my reward?"

She averted her gaze, and much that is common language among lovers in all lands and centuries passed between them. They made a gracious-looking pair, fit to inhabit old Athens in the days of her glory—she with her slender form and free-flowing auburn hair above the classic face; he, huge-headed and beardless, with slim but stalwart form, thick reddish-brown hair trimmed down to the neck, a lean vigorous face glowing with health, and a golden robe which, like hers, reached only to the knees.

But though her face radiated gladness, she would not permit him to take her into his arms. "No, Kannu, no!" she protested. "You know the law. Before a maiden may give herself to a man, he must have proved his worth—must have added something, though ever so little, to the world's treasury of knowledge or beauty."

"But what would you have me do, La-Glo? Only two moons ago I was ordained in the Order of Manhood. I have studied the ways of nature, but—"

The girl gazed out across the Amethyst City, with its miles of winding lavender-tinted walks. There was a softness in her tone, yet a firmness as she replied, "Listen, Kannu. The Grand Sholite has only now made an announcement—one to interest such as you." And she told of the competition for the Purple Badge of Merit.

Even as she spoke, a third figure stepped out of a little door behind them, moving so quietly as to be unobserved. He was little older than Kannu, and was dressed, like him, in a golden robe. But his features had not the same openness and frankness; they were less regular, and the aquiline nose, bent a trifle awry, gave him a slightly twisted appearance; while his form was thinner and shorter than Kannu's, and his eyes, smaller and closer together, gleamed from their narrow black depths with a shrewd and shifty light.

For a moment he stood silently listening on the parapet—"True! By the crown of the Sholite," he heard the other man swear, "I will go to Red-Ash Desert! I will seek the Purple Badge of Merit! I will bring back valuable relics of the Missing Link! Then, La-Glo—then will you consent?"

"Yes, then—" she had started to say, when all at once the intruder stepped up.

"Ah, my sister—and my brother!" said he, using the common terms of address. "You will pardon me. I could not help overhearing."

La-Glo and Kannu stared silently at the newcomer; the brows of both men were wrinkled in hostility. "What is it you

want, Nasire?" Kannu demanded at last.

"Only the right that the law allows," Nasire returned, in silken tones beneath which a dagger seemed to lurk. "You know the law. When two men court a maiden, she must give herself to him who has shown most merit in the eyes of the world."

"It is a bad law!" snarled Kannu. "A maiden should mate with him whom her heart demands."

"No, Kannu, it is a good law," Nasire denied. "It is a law that populates the world with the ablest people. For a long while I have loved La-Glo. But she has turned from me. Now I claim my right. If I prove more worthy than you, Kannu —then she will be mine!"

La-Glo had shrunk back. Her eyes were contracted; her countenance was wrinkled in a frown. But she said nothing, for she too knew the law.

Kannu stalked close to his rival; and, looming above him a full half foot, shrilled his challenge, "Let it be so, Nasire! I fear not the creeping spawn of worms such as you. What shall the test be?"

Nasire's little black eyes seemed to twist and dance in his head. "We shall see who is the creeping spawn of worms. Let this be the test. We are both trained in exploring the ancient layers of the earth. Let us then go forth into Red-Ash Desert, and dig for the relics of the Missing Link. He who, in the third part of a year, shall have made the find of greater value—he shall be the most worthy in the eyes of the law, and to him shall La-Glo fall as a precious prize."

"Let it be so!" agreed Kannu. And then, turning to the girl, "Fear not, La-Glo. The test is a fair one. I would not deserve the happiness of winning you if I could not prove worthier than Nasire."

The look that darted to him from the girl's flashing dark eyes told more plainly than words, "I have faith in you, Kannu!" And it was with a smiling confidence that he fastened on his wings again, waved her good-by, and went soaring off high above the domes and minarets of the Amethyst City.

II

A QUARTER of a year had passed. The unclouded sun of Red-Ash Desert glared down upon dusty plains fringed by sharp blue rocky mountains. For untold scores of miles, sagebrush and cactus had the desolation to themselves. Here and there a lizard crawled or a rattlesnake twisted; but, except in two minute spots, there was no sign that man had ever inhabited this planet. These spots were about half a mile apart, toward the western rim of the desert and not far from the base of the mountains: in each of them a tent-like shed had been installed, and each contained a cot and chair, kegs of preserved food and of refrigerated water, numbers of charts and maps, and masses of scientific apparatus. Not many feet from each of these shanties, an excavation had been begun; and in each excavation, for many hours a day, a man sweated in the intense heat while driving a mechanical drill which, operated by the power of sunlight, was capable of doing the work of a thousand laborers.

Of the two cavities, one was at least twice as deep and wide as the other; and, working in this depression, was none other than Kannu, his golden robe exchanged for a rude dust-colored garment as his drill bored through the earth and automatically shoveled out the torn-up rock and soil. In the smaller excavation, Nasire might have been observed, his lips drooping, his little eyes drawn together in his twisted face as if perpetually dwelling on something shrewd and dark.

Only rarely did the two men meet and exchange a word. "Well, brother, any

discoveries?" Nasire would ask, with a cynical smile, when he strolled toward Kannu's headquarters of an evening. And Kannu would answer, "Not a thing, brother. How goes it with you?" And Nasire would scowl, and say, "The gods have forgotten me."

Yet, in a little locked chest, Nasire carefully guarded several new-found relics: a curved fragment of blue glass, the upper half of a gold tooth, a headless ivory statuette, and the broken neck of a clay vase. He did not know if any of these were of much value; yet he chuckled secretly when, at nights, he took up the receiver of his wireless telephone and listened for information as to Kannu's progress. This was an easy thing to do—as easy as tuning in a radio on a specified station; for he knew that every night, at a particular time, Kannu called a certain wave-length and held a long conversation with La-Glo, who eagerly waited a hundred miles away, in her home on the Avenue of the Vermilion Roses in Amethyst City. It was, it is true, considered a matter of honor not to listen in on a neighbor's conversation; but Nasire was not one to be held back by foolish compunctions—not when there was no danger of being caught. And so he listened, and gnashed his teeth when the two lovers exchanged endearments; but his eyes twinkled with enjoyment when night after night Kannu reported, "No luck yet, O apple of my heart. Again I have toiled hard all day, but have dug up nothing but sand and dust. Not so much as a fragment of masonry, or a scrap of porcelain! The gods smile not upon me."

Now that only one moon of the allotted time remained and he was far ahead in the race, Nasire felt his heart begin to leap within him. He could see Kannu slinking away defeated and humiliated; could see himself with the lovely La-Glo in his arms. Who could say?—he might even be awarded the Purple Badge of Merit!

III

BUT one evening three weeks later, upon adjusting the wireless to La-Glo's wave-length, he heard words that struck him like a blow. The voice was Kannu's; but the tones were so jubilant that he could hardly recognize the speaker. "Flower of my soul, listen! I have made a discovery! Only this afternoon—this afternoon my drill hit a hard substance. After a while I found that it was a wall—of a gray mineral, covering a thick layer of metal. I followed up and down for many feet, and discovered it to be perfectly regular. Indeed, O rose of my being! it turned out to be but one side of a great chest, as large as a small room, which had been preserved from the days of the Missing Link!"

"May the saviors on high be praised!" returned the exultant La-Glo. "Now, O delight of my days, you will be found more worthy than Nasire! We shall pass our days forever together! You will be awarded the Purple Badge of Merit!"

"So I hope, O fragrance of my existence! But let us not measure the future's gifts so soon. I had not time today to break into the great chest and observe its contents. Tomorrow we shall know our destiny!"

With a groan, Nasire tore the wireless from his ears; and, with eyes that blazed like a wild beast's at bay, began stamping up and down the length of the rude little shed.

Then, bursting out of doors, he shook his fists menacingly toward the desert stars that burnt in their myraids out of the clear, pitiless skies.

"By the purple towers," he swore, aloud, "he shall not have her! He shall not! As surely as I am Nasire, the son of Ram the temple builder, I shall find a way to prevent!"

That night Nasire did not sleep; nor did he work the next day. He could hardly hold back his impatience until, in

the evening, he listened again to Kannu's conversation with La-Glo. But as his rival's words reached him, a glitter came into his eyes and he drew his first glad breath in twenty-four hours. "Alas, O heart of nectar," he heard Kannu reporting, "there was little progress today. The chest is thick and tough—so much so that it baffles me. I have toiled hard to penetrate it with the sun-drill, but have made only little dents in its side. But tomorrow, if the gods favor, I shall succeed."

Yet on the morrow the gods did not favor—nor on the next day, nor the next. A triumphant smile returned to Nasire's dark, anxious countenance as he listened to the tales of his enemy's Herculean attempts to break through the stout covering of the vault. Was it possible that, after all, Kannu's find was but leading down a blind alley? So Nasire half believed; yet with his hope was still mingled a taste of foreboding. And on the fifth evening after the announcement of the discovery—only four days before the competition was to close! —he heard a report that caused his fists to clench, and brought a muttering to his lips and a look of torment to his face.

"The gods have blessed me, O precious one! It is opened, opened! Yes, the great chest is opened! It is filled to the top—filled with such relics of the Missing Link as I cannot begin to describe! Things of gold and iron, of wood and glass, of copper and marble! All, all has been preserved in an airless crypt! It is the greatest find, O radiance of my days, that any one has ever taken out of Red-Ash Desert!"

"All glory to the High Ones!" fervently came back the voice of La-Glo. "I knew you would triumph, O soul of my soul! Now surely the Sholite himself will bestow on you the Purple Badge of Merit! We will walk hand in hand through all our days."

"We will walk hand in hand, O divine one! But first there is much to be done. There are so many relics that I cannot remove them all myself. Tomorrow at dawn I fly back to the Amethyst City, taking with me a relic of the Missing Link. Then I shall feast my eyes on you, O La-Glo, and find trusty brothers to help me carry away the treasure. I shall not return to Red-Ash Desert until the sun is low in the west."

There was much more that was said, but Nasire did not wait to listen. Throwing down the wireless receiver, he once more ranged the floor of his shed with a black scowl on his face and a blazing wild-beast light in his eyes. "By the hide of the horned toad!" he swore. "I will foil their scheme! I will foil it, or I do not deserve to call La-Glo mine!"

IV

DEEP into the night he lay tossing on his cot, mumbling to himself and weighing plots and counter-plots. But there was only one plan that, after deliberation, seemed at all practicable. When the first faint sparks of sunrise filtered in from above the eastern ranges, he was on his feet; and, stepping out into the dawn, stood watching until he saw a winged figure rise from above the rival establishment half a mile away.

Straight up and up until it was no more than a dot against the zenith, the flier darted almost with a bullet's speed; and no sooner had he melted into the heavens than Nasire, re-entering his shanty, seized a sun-torch, a bar of condensed food and a container of water, and set out across the desert.

As he approached Kannu's shed and excavation, Nasire absently munched his breakfast and sipped of the water. "Now, thanks be to the gods, I have all day!" he reflected. "What a trustful fool is this Kannu, to go away and leave his treasure unguarded! Does he think I will hold

back merely because the law puts a man on his honor not to enter another's claim! Faugh! who but an empty-head would obey such a law when the stakes are the maiden he loves and the Purple Badge of Merit! Such a half-wit does not deserve to win! While Kannu is away, I will be taking his prizes from him. And how—how in the name of the seven Sages—will he ever get them back again?"

Cheered by such thoughts, Nasire reached the brink of his rival's excavations, and let himself down by a rude stairway into the twenty-foot depths. All about him great red masses of torn earth and rock were piled; but to these he scarcely gave a glance as he pressed on into a tunnel barely high enough to contain his stooping figure. As he entered, he heard something hissing at his feet, and shot back just in time to avoid a pair of darting fangs. "What is it? An ill omen?" he wondered, as he slew the reptile with a bolt from his sun-torch. "Does Kannu engage rattlesnakes to guard his claim?"

Dismissing this whimsical idea, he pressed on a few yards to a wide, partly exposed wall of asbestos-covered steel. Through this barrier, which was about half a foot thick, a perforation had been made, barely large enough to permit the passage of a man's body. Seen in the yellow rays of the sun-lamp, the whole looked uncanny —uncanny as the ruins of an old tomb. "By the black imps of the Under-earth!" Nasire muttered. "Kannu has come across an ancient burial place!"

Though far from a superstitious man, he hesitated an instant before he slipped his slim form through the aperture into the steel chest. An odd, creepy sensation had come over him; something weird and invisible seemed to place a hand on his shoulder, and restrain him, "Hold back! Hold back!" But why hold back? Kannu would not return until evening—there was time and to spare to accomplish his ends.

Inside the sepulchre-like container, the air was stale and musty-smelling, and seemed burdened with some intangible weight; while, awe-stricken, Nasire blinked and peered about him like one transported to a strange planet. He was within what appeared to be a perfect cube, with sides about twelve feet long; a cube laden with most fascinating-looking articles. There were bizarre machines, with all manner of bulbs and dials; there were queer-shaped steel rods, and glass tubes with curious filaments inside; there were little ornamented disks of copper, silver and gold, which, Nasire thought, had probably been children's playthings; there were paintings of men and women with frozen expressions and preposterous, complicated clothes that covered them from the neck down; there were pictures of what looked like cities, only they could not have been cities, they were so ludicrous and ugly with the tall walls massed one against the other and the towers pointing high into the heavens. Nasire could not help smiling as he glanced at these representations, which he interpreted as the fancies—the caricatures —of humorous artists. And likewise he smiled when he took up the little objects all made of many thin white wafers with black markings all over them in regular columns. What, he wondered, could be the meaning of such hieroglyphics?

What, indeed, was the object of this whole queer vault? If it was a tomb, where was the casket with the interred royalty? The more Nasire flashed his sun-lamp through the gloom, the more puzzled he became; for nothing could have been further from the conception of a Son of the Later Dawn than that the children of an earlier age, sealing representative products of their civilization in an air-tight crypt, should have sought thus to preserve their secrets for the marveling eyes of the future.

But whatever the answer to the archeological riddle, there was one thing Nasire

could not doubt: that the find was such as to entitle the lucky discoverer to the Purple Badge of Merit. And, at that thought, fury filled him. Never, even when listening to Kannu's most enthusiastic reports, had he realized the extent of the discovery. And had he time now, in the mere half day before his rival's return, to strip the chest of its chief treasures? At least, he would try!

Half maddened, as tantalizing visions came to him of La-Glo bending to his rival's embrace, Nasire set about to accomplish his end. He did not pause to rest, though the sweat dripped from him and his parched tongue hung out like a thirsty dog's.

Time after time, weighed down with armfuls of relics, he left the treasure-vault, climbed to the brink of the excavation and deposited his stolen wealth in the sunlight. Later in the day he would go for his wings, and a score of rapid trips would convey all the loot to his excavation!

But though he chuckled as he visualized Kannu's discomfiture and saw himself the honored winner of the award and the claimant of La-Glo's love, Nasire still was haunted by a deep uneasiness as he toiled through the burning hours; and each time he returned to the treasure room he did so with greater reluctance. At last, in the early afternoon, he had taken out every detachable article—all except one: a curious-looking cylindrical steel object about three feet long and half a foot thick, which reposed in a corner behind a wire netting, in the midst of a number of little red flags, which had been ranged about it as if in warning.

Again some restraining hand seemed to draw Nasire back; but his heart was set on this last prize. Though he tottered beneath its weight, he lifted the steel cylinder from the floor; staggered with it to the entrance of the vault; and then, since he could not climb out with so heavy an object, he gave a mighty lunge and threw it through the opening—

Instantly all things seemed to go up in smoke and fire. There came a flash of flame and a detonation as of thunder—and the world was blotted from Nasire's gaze— An observer flying miles above on a trans-country flight, was startled at the sudden eruption of rock and debris, which filled the air as from a miniature volcano, and then gradually settled back and was lost amid the endless red waste.

V

RETURNING with two helpers just before sunset, Kannu gasped in amazement, and rubbed his eyes unbelievingly. Had he, by mistake, come to the wrong spot? No, it was impossible!—for the instruments were tested and had never been known to fail. Yet where his shed and excavation had been, there was only a mass of tumbled ruins, with earth and rock strewn chaotically for dozens of yards. Nothing, apparently, remained of the treasure vault, nor of the tunnel leading to it! Nor was there any sign of the one man who might have been able to offer an explanation; for Nasire was nowhere to be seen about his own excavation, nor anywhere else on the wide, blank desert, though his tools and living apparatus were scattered about his headquarters as if in anticipation of his early return!

The only clues to the mystery—clues as imperfect as letters in some unknown tongue—were in the shape of fragments of powder-blackened metal which, strewn about the scene of the disaster, proved on analysis to be of an alloy unknown to the People of the Later Dawn. Kannu and his companions, as they dolefully surveyed the wreck of what had promised to be an unparalleled discovery, concluded that the blackened scraps of metal had somehow helped to bring about the catastrophe; but,

being ignorant of the ways of the Missing Link, they could not have been expected to guess that the metal had been part of a high-powered air bomb, which Nasire had unwittingly exploded.

It might have been possible for the investigators, by means of their sun-drills, to dig among the ruins and shed further light on what had happened. But a stern order from the Grand Sholite flashed over the wireless telephone as soon as he had been notified of what had occurred. "Come away, my sons! Come away from Red-Ash Desert! We shall investigate the Missing Link no more! I am now convinced that there is truth in the old tradition that the Missing Link was evil, and that their ways and works were evil, and only evil shall come to him who plunges his spade into the soil where they lie buried! Let the dust of the centuries continue to cover them ever more deeply, for in that, O my sons, lies our protection!"

Nevertheless, there was one relic which had been taken out of the mysterious vault, and which Kannu had brought with him to the Amethyst City on the day of the disaster. It was one of the objects composed of many thin sheets, each of them filled with long rows of inscriptions in that queer writing of the Missing Link; and the grayish white of these leaves, now that they were exposed to the air after being sealed up for ages, began in a short while to give place to a sickly yellow. But the relic was kept under glass in the Museum of Antiquities and was considered its chief treasure; and committees of scientists came from afar to examine it, and shook their heads and pondered long and debated concerning the writing, and composed learned articles about it. "Doubtless," they agreed, "it was some sacred lore of the Missing Link." Meanwhile, as a fitting reward for finding so wondrous an article, Kannu was granted the Purple Badge of Merit by none other than the Grand Sholite. Not being able to read the words on the drab gray cover of the ancient treasure, the observers did not know that what it said was, "Los Angeles Telephone Directory. November, 1939."

But it mattered little to Kannu what this writing meant; for as he stood once more on the third parapet of the Balcony of the Sun and looked out over the Amethyst City, he held in his arms the one he most desired.

"Listen, La-Glo, glory of my existence," he declared. "The Missing Links could not have been wholly evil, after all, for it is through them that I found the way to you."

Herbert West: Reanimator

By H. P. LOVECRAFT

Episode the first in the gruesome adventures of Herbert West, a young scientist consumed with the ambition of bringing back the dead to life!

[FIRST INSTALMENT]

I. From the Dark

OF Herbert West, who was my friend in college and in after life, I can speak only with extreme terror. This terror is not due altogether to the sinister manner of his recent disappearance, but was engendered by the whole nature of his life-work, and first gained its acute form more than seventeen years ago, when we were in the third year of our course at the Miskatonic University medical school in Arkham. While he was with me, the wonder and diabolism of his experiments fascinated me utterly, and I was his closest companion. Now that he is gone and the spell is broken, the actual fear is greater. Memories and possibilities are ever more hideous than realities.

The first horrible incident of our acquaintance was the greatest shock I ever experienced, and it is only with reluctance that I repeat it. As I have said, it happened when we were in the medical school, where West had already made himself notorious through his wild theories on the nature of death and the possibility of overcoming it artificially. His views, which were widely ridiculed by the faculty and by his fellow-students, hinged on the essentially mechanistic nature of life; and concerned means for operating the organic machinery of mankind by calculated chemical action after the failure of natural processes. In his experiments with various animating solutions he had killed and treated immense numbers of rabbits, guinea-pigs, cats, dogs, and monkeys, till he had become the prime nuisance of the college. Several times he had actually obtained signs of life in animals supposedly dead; in many cases violent signs; but he soon saw that the perfection of his process, if indeed possible, would necessarily involve a lifetime of research. It likewise became clear that, since the same solution never worked alike on different organic species, he would require human subjects for further and more specialized progress. It was here that he first came into conflict with the college authorities, and was debarred from future experiments by no less a dignitary than the dean of the medical school himself—the learned and benevolent Dr. Allan Halsey, whose work in behalf of the stricken is recalled by every old resident of Arkham.

I had always been exceptionally tolerant of West's pursuits, and we frequently discussed his theories, whose ramifications and corollaries were almost infinite. Holding with Haeckel that all life is a chemical and physical process, and that the so-called "soul" is a myth, my friend believed that artificial reanimation of the dead can depend only on the condition of the tissues; and that unless actual decomposition has set in, a corpse fully equipped with organs may with suitable measures be set going

"We laid the specimen on an improvised dissecting table in the old farm house. Then we set to work . . ."

again in the peculiar fashion known as life. That the psychic or intellectual life might be impaired by the slight deterioration of sensitive brain-cells which even a short period of death would be apt to cause, West fully realized. It had at first been his hope to find a reagent which would restore vitality before the actual advent of death, and only repeated failures on animals had shown him that the natural and artificial life-motions were incompatible. He then sought extreme freshness in his specimens, injecting his solutions into the blood immediately after the extinction of life. It was this circumstance which made the professors so carelessly skeptical, for they felt that true death had not occurred in any case. They did not stop to view the matter closely and reasoningly.

IT WAS not long after the faculty had interdicted his work that West confided to me his resolution to get fresh human bodies in some manner, and continue in secret the experiments he could no longer perform openly. To hear him dis-

cussing ways and means was rather ghastly, for at the college we had never procured anatomical specimens ourselves. Whenever the morgue proved inadequate, two local Negroes attended to this matter, and they were seldom questioned. West was then a small, slender, spectacled youth with delicate features, yellow hair, pale blue eyes, and a soft voice, and it was uncanny to hear him dwelling on the relative merits of Christ Church Cemetery and the potter's field. We finally decided on the potter's field, because practically everybody in Christ Church was embalmed; a thing of course ruinous to West's researches.

I was by this time his active and enthralled assistant, and helped him make all his decisions, not only concerning the source of bodies but concerning a suitable place for our loathsome work. It was I who thought of the deserted Chapman farmhouse beyond Meadow Hill, where we fitted up on the ground floor an operating room and a laboratory, each with dark curtains to conceal our midnight doings. The place was far from any road, and in sight of no other house, yet precautions were none the less necessary; since rumors of strange lights, started by chance nocturnal roamers, would soon bring disaster on our enterprise. It was agreed to call the whole thing a chemical laboratory if discovery should occur. Gradually we equipped our sinister haunt of science with materials either purchased in Boston or quietly borrowed from the college—materials carefully made unrecognizable save to expert eyes—and provided spades and picks for the many burials we should have to make in the cellar. At the college we used an incinerator, but the apparatus was too costly for our unauthorized laboratory. Bodies were always a nuisance—even the small guinea-pig bodies from the slight clandestine experiments in West's room at the boarding-house.

We followed the local death-notices like ghouls, for our specimens demanded particular qualities. When we wanted were corpses interred soon after death and without artificial preservation; preferably free from malforming disease, and certainly with all organs present. Accident victims were our best hope. Not for many weeks did we hear of anything suitable; though we talked with morgue and hospital authorities, ostensibly in the college's interest, as often as we could without exciting suspicion. We found that the college had first choice in every case, so that it might be necessary to remain in Arkham during the summer, when only the limited summer-school classes were held. In the end, though, luck favored us; for one day we heard of an almost ideal case in the potter's field; a brawny young workman drowned only the morning before in Sumner's Pond, and buried at the town's expense without delay or embalming. That afternoon we found the new grave, and determined to begin work soon after midnight.

It was a repulsive task that we undertook in the black small hours, even though we lacked at that time the special horror of graveyards which later experiences brought to us. We carried spades and oil dark lanterns, for although electric torches were then manufactured, they were not as satisfactory as the tungsten contrivances of today. The process of unearthing was slow and sordid—it might have been gruesomely poetical if we had been artists instead of scientists—and we were glad when our spades struck wood. When the pine box was fully uncovered West scrambled down and removed the lid, dragging out and propping up the contents. I reached down and hauled the contents out of the grave, and then we both toiled hard to restore the spot to its former appearance. The affair made us rather nervous, especially the stiff form and vacant face of our first trophy, but we managed to remove all traces of our

visit. When we had patted down the last shovelful of earth we put the specimen in a canvas sack and set out for the old Chapman place beyond Meadow Hill.

ON AN improvised dissecting-table in the old farmhouse, by the light of a powerful acetylene lamp, the specimen was not very spectral looking. It had been a sturdy and apparently unimaginative youth of wholesome plebeian type — large-framed, gray-eyed, and brown-haired—a sound animal without psychological subtleties, and probably having vital processes of the simplest and healthiest sort. Now, with the eyes closed, it looked more asleep than dead; though the expert tests of my friend soon left no doubt on that score. We had at last what West had always longed for—a real dead man of the ideal kind, ready for the solution as prepared according to the most careful calculations and theories for human use. The tension on our part became very great. We know that there was scarcely a chance for anything like complete success, and could not avoid hideous fears at possible grotesque results of partial animation. Especially were we apprehensive concerning the mind and impulses of the creature, since in the space following death some of the more delicate cerebral cells might well have suffered deterioration. I, myself, still held some curious notions about the traditional "soul" of man, and felt an awe at the secrets that might be told by one returning from the dead. I wondered what sights this placid youth might have seen in inaccessible spheres, and what he could relate if fully restored to life. But my wonder was not overwhelming, since for the most part I shared the materialism of my friend. He was calmer than I as he forced a large quantity of his fluid into a vein of the body's arm, immediately binding the incision securely.

The waiting was gruesome, but West never faltered. Every now and then he applied his stethoscope to the specimen, and bore the negative results philosophically. After about three-quarters of an hour without the least sign of life he disappointed pronounced the solution inadequate, but determined to make the most of his opportunity and try one change in the formula before disposing of his ghastly prize. We had that afternoon dug a grave in the cellar, and would have to fill it by dawn—for although we had fixed a lock on the house we wished to shun even the remotest risk of a ghoulish discovery. Besides, the body would not be even approximately fresh the next night. So taking the solitary acetylene lamp into the adjacent laboratory, we left our silent guest on the slab in the dark, and bent every energy to the mixing of a new solution; the weighing and measuring supervised by West with an almost fanatical care.

The awful event was very sudden, and wholly unexpected. I was pouring something from one test-tube to another, and West was busy over the alcohol blast-lamp which had to answer for a Bunsen burner in this gasless edifice, when from the pitch-black room we had left there burst the most appalling and demoniac succession of cries that either of us had ever heard. Not more unutterable could have been the chaos of hellish sound if the pit itself had opened to release the agony of the damned, for in one inconceivable cacophony was centered all the supernal terror and unnatural despair of animate nature. Human it could not have been—it is not in man to make such sounds—and without a thought of our late employment or its possible discovery both West and I leaped to the nearest window like stricken animals; overturning tubes, lamp, and retorts, and vaulting madly into the starred abyss of the rural night. I think we screamed ourselves as we stumbled frantically toward the town, though as we reached the outskirts we put

on a semblance of restraint—just enough to seem like belated revelers staggering home from a debauch.

We did not separate, but managed to get to West's room, where we whispered with the gas up until dawn. By then we had calmed ourselves a little with rational theories and plans for investigation, so that we could sleep through the day—classes being disregarded. But that evening two items in the paper, wholly unrelated, made it again impossible for us to sleep. The old deserted Chapman house had inexplicably burned to an amorphous heap of ashes; that we could understand because of the upset lamp. Also, an attempt had been made to disturb a new grave in the potter's field, as if by futile and spadeless clawing at the earth. That we could not understand, for we had patted down the mould very carefully.

And for seventeen years after that West would look frequently over his shoulder, and complain of fancied footsteps behind him.

Now he has disappeared.

Hunger

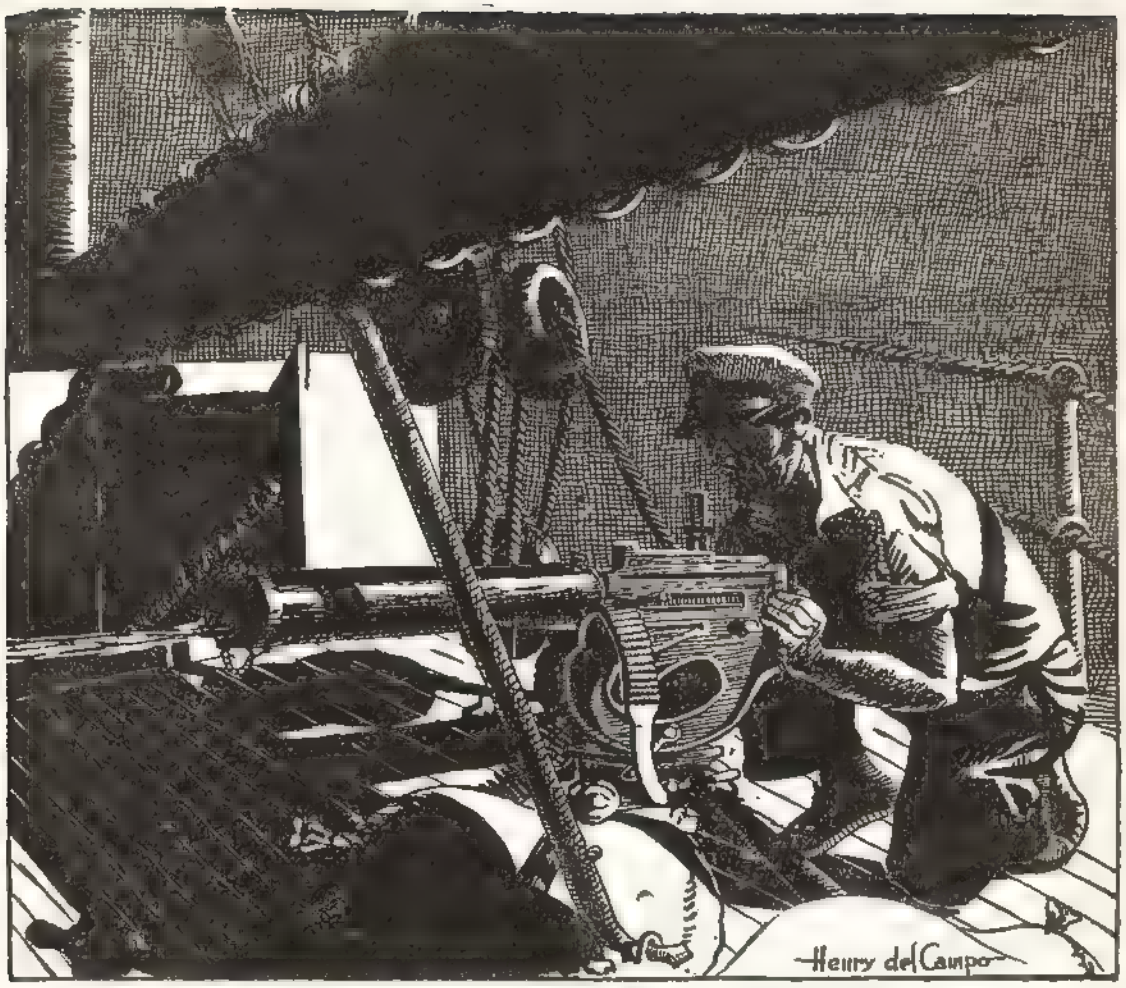
By PAGE COOPER

THIS black, lush night has bloomed its span.
Foredoomed, it plops into the insatiate maw
of Time the carnivore whose hideous claw
Plucks at our hours. Hot breathed since we began

To savor living, squeeze its essence, taste
Its sharp intoxication, ghoulish Time
Has snorted at our heels. In luscious prime
He tears our pleasures from us. One we raced

To save from this life-lusting beast one night,
One moment only. All our mortal days
Are swallowed. But no finite food allays
This hunger, vast, illimitable, bright.

While blear-eyed mortals vainly clutch their hours,
With neither slack nor pause, lewd Time devours.



"I jumped around and started that damned gun squirting."

Death of the Kraken

By DAVID H. KELLER

What fearsome shape reared its horrid head over the doomed boat in the Sargasso Sea?—Put this story down before you read the last page—and see if you can guess the ending!

"BROTHER, can you spare a dime?" the man asked me in the low monotone used by the chronic panhandler.

"No money," I replied, "but I will give you a good meal and something to drink."

I took him to a chop house. From the way he ate there was no doubt of his hunger. It seemed that he never would be satisfied. Finally he finished, emptied his glass of beer and accepted a cigarette. He looked across the table at me.

"That is the first meal I have had for two days," he said, "and what do you do for a living that makes you want to feed a man like me?"

"I write for a living," I answered with a little twisted smile, "and sometimes I sell what I write and sometimes I fail to. When my brain gets dull I hunt up a man like you and he tells me a story."

"So you want a story to pay for the meal?"

"If you have one and want to tell it to me. But you do not really owe me anything. I was amply repaid by your enjoyment of the food."

"Ever hear of the Sargasso Sea?"

"Sure. For some thousands of years every traveler has told about it. Maundeville described it. Columbus sailed through it. Oviedo gave it a name from *sargaco*, the Portuguese word for seaweed. Drake sailed through it for five days. The scientist Humboldt described it. What do you know about it?"

"Not much. But I have been there."

"No story in that. Thousands have been there. Used to be a place of mystery, port of lost ships caught in the weeds and rotting till they sunk. But those old stories were based on fancy. Simply a lot of weeds there, mainly the *Sargassum bacciferum*, and ocean trash carried by the Gulf Stream. The old tales of prisoned ships and sea monsters were just the imagination of frightened seamen whose memory became more vivid with every drink of rum."

"Then no matter what I tell you, you will not believe me?"

"What difference does that make so long as I listen? Have a drink?"

"Yes, another beer. Now in regard to the story. I was loafing one day in the lobby of a cheap hotel here in New York, wondering how much longer I could go without food, when up comes a man and asks if I want a job. We started to talk, and it seemed that he wanted a man who could handle a machine-gun or even something bigger. That was right in my line.

"Yes, sir! When it comes to machine-guns I know what I am doing. I have used them in a dozen wars, from a half-pint revolution in South America to real fighting in the World War. Of course I did not know where he was going to take me and the gun, but a job just then looked rather good to me.

It turned out that it was not a real fight he was financing, but a sea voyage. He was interested in this Sargasso Sea. Had an idea that everything the old travelers wrote about it was not so much imagination; told me that there must be some part of their story true, and he was going to find out. Had his ship and crew and only lacked a gunner.

"What do you want a machine-gun for?" I asked him.

"He tried to explain it to me. He said he had been working on the trip for years and had read everything he could put his hands on—all the tales of the old travelers starting in with a Greek called Plato. I happened to remember that name because he called the old cat on the ship Plato. Then he went on to say that one part of the story which was repeated again and again had to do with sea monsters that picked the sailors off the ships and ate them, and if anything like that happened to us a machine-gun would come in handy.

"I signed for the trip. Of course I did not believe his story about those sea monsters; thought he was starting a little private war or something, but the wages were good and when I saw his ship I knew the eating was going to be good. That man Ferguson was certainly a real man, and he tried his best to make the crew have a comfortable time.

"His ship had made several voyages north and it sure was stoutly built—sails when there was a wind and an oil-burning engine to use in the calm. There were

eight of us aboard: the captain, four sailors, the cook, Ferguson and myself.

"SECOND day out of New York he explained his plan to us. Once in the Gulf Stream he was going to drift. If his idea was right the ship would finally find its way right into the middle of this Sargasso Sea, and he claimed that there was no telling what we would find there because for some hundreds of years all the ships had tried their best to keep away from this center instead of hunting for it."

"Have another glass of beer," I suggested. "You are telling a good story and another drink will help you make it better."

"No. I will wait till I finish. We sailed on for about a week and finally get to the place where the captain thinks we can start drifting, and that is what we do. On the third day we see some weeds and in a week the whole ocean is covered with them. From then on, the ship went slower and slower. Some days, for several hours at a time, it hardly seemed to move at all.

"Ferguson was having the time of his life studying the weeds and the little fish that lived among them. He would talk to us every night about the new discoveries of the day. One night he showed us a fish that had legs on it instead of fins, and toes on the end of the legs. Every time he found a new fish he would put it in a glass jar with alcohol to pickle it. Happy as a boy with a new toy. Of course the life was slow for the rest of us, but he was the boss and our pay was good and we sort of jollied him along."

"And how soon did you meet the first wreck?" I asked.

He laughed. "We actually did see them. Five in one day when we came into the dead center of the sea. By that time the weeds made a mat that in some places was over five feet deep. It almost looked as though a man could walk on it, and here and there a ship silently rotting and almost covered with barnacles and weeds. In three days we visited seven of them, and the night of the third day Ferguson asked me to have a talk with him in his cabin.

"He asked me if I had noticed anything peculiar about those seven ships. Of course I told him that they were all old, but what he wanted me to say was that there were no bones on any of them. I laughed at him when he said that. *Bones?* Of course not! Those old ships got stuck in the weeds and when the crews found out that they were not going to get out of the weeds any other way they provisioned boats and tried to get out to open water. Ferguson did not see it that way. You see he still had the idea that some kind of animal had eaten those sailors before they had time to either escape or starve to death. Then he asked me to have the gun ready because there was just a chance that this animal would come after us.

"Of course he was the boss and I was there to obey him; so I humored him and asked him just what kind of an animal he thought was going to eat us, because I wanted to know how to mount the gun and where to shoot at it."

"Wait a minute," I said interrupting him. "Let me tell you what Ferguson told you. I have read a great many of those old tales. Ferguson had nothing else to go by except those stories. He put them all together and from them made a composite animal. It had a body about thirty feet long, four legs and a tail. The neck was as long as the body, ending in a head big as a barrel with large eyes as big as dinner plates. There are whiskers about three feet long. It could swallow a man with one gulp. How is that? Anything like what Ferguson told you?"

"Just about right. Of course I thought he was daffy to even think there could be such a creature, but if he was willing to pretend there was one I was willing to

string along with him. We talked it over and decided that the only way to kill anything like that was to put a dozen bullets into the brain through the eyes or the open mouth. And that would take some clever shooting, because that critter was not going to hold its head still when he was charging on the ship.

"The next morning I got the gun out and put it together and fired a few practise shots. That was sure a sweet gun and worked as easy as a sewing-machine. If you moved it slowly you could cut a tree down with the bullets. Some of the crew asked me what it was for, but I didn't tell them about the idea Ferguson had. What was the use? I knew there wasn't any such animal.

"That next night, the night after I put the gun on deck, two of the crew who had been on deck duty disappeared. Just dropped out of the picture. Not a drop of blood, not a sound of pain or fear. On the deck at early dawn, off the deck at sunrise. Nothing to explain it.

"Ferguson listened to the captain's report and made no comments. He simply went ahead with his study of the little fishes.

"The captain rested all that day, and the next night he stayed on the deck till morning while the two sailors took alternate watches. Nothing happened, and nothing unusually different for another night. Then on the third night, morning came and the captain and one of the sailors were gone. Sounds rather silly to put it that way, to simply say they were gone!

"THAT left four of us, the cook, one sailor, Ferguson. And myself. I talked it over with the sailor and then I went and told the boss that the best thing to do would be to get the engine started if we could and get out of there while the getting was good. But he said no! If those men had been eaten by that animal, sea monster or Kraken or whatever I wanted to call it, it was up to me to kill it and that was why he had brought me along with the crew. I told him I would take a chance at killing anything in the daytime, but what chance was there hitting it at night when it attacked us so silently that there was no alarm given by the one sailor who had escaped?"

"Your story is getting good," I commented.

"You bet it is. And now listen to this. The cook was a rather old man, and he was just plain jittery. Drunk much of the time and trembled like a leaf when he had to go on deck even in the daytime. The next night the three of us were in the cabin waiting for supper. Of course we were not supposed to eat together—not the best of discipline on a ship to have the crew eat with the master—but Ferguson thought it would make things easier for the cook. So we were waiting and wondering why the cook was late bringing the food. Ferguson said he was going to see what was the matter, and he left the cabin and when he came back he simply said that the cook was gone. The three of us hunted all over the ship but we never found him. There was a tray of spilled food on the deck. He must have been carrying it to us when he was caught. At least that was the way Ferguson figured it out."

"That is the only plausible explanation," I said.

"Sure it is. Now that left three of us. I made up my mind to trick that monster. Told Ferguson about my plan and he thought it pretty good. We made a dummy out of some old sails and smeared it all over with lard to make it smell, and then we put that dummy up near the mast with a lantern near him, and I trained the gun so it would spray the bullets about four feet over his head, and I was going to stay there and when the monster dove for him I would start shooting. Ferguson and the

sailor were going to stay on deck but at the other end of the ship.

"Nothing happened—not a thing! Toward morning the boss came up and said he was going down and get some sleep. At sun-up I decided to get something to eat and try to sleep. Not that I felt sleepy, you understand, because my nerves were jumpy, but it seemed that if I had to go through another night of watching I just had to sleep. And when I was drinking my coffee it just occurred to me that I had not seen the sailor. I hunted for him, could not find him and then woke Ferguson. All he knew was that the sailor had been on deck when he had gone to his cabin.

"We talked it over, and decided that while I was watching that dummy the damned thing had sneaked around the other side and caught the last sailor and killed him before he had time to yell even once.

"I told Ferguson that as far as I was concerned I had had just enough. The best thing we could do was to get that engine started if we could and get away from there before we died like the other six. He asked me to stay just one more night and try the dummy bait again. If nothing happened then, he promised to leave the next morning. I did not like the idea, and told him so, but finally I gave in to him. We worked on the engine that day and found it was in perfect condition. He knew a good deal about machinery and showed me just how to start it and run it, in case, he said, anything happened to him the next night. But he promised to say shut in his cabin and not come out till he heard me start the machine-gun. How about that beer?"

I ORDERED it for him and he drank it slowly. Then he continued his story. I was rather sure by this time that the whole thing was a clever lie, but I wanted to know how he was going to finish it.

"Toward dusk I put some bacon on the dummy to make him smell better and then I started to do some tall thinking. There was no moon and not much starlight. That animal, Kraken or whatever you want to call it, was smart. What he would likely do was to recognize the fact that the dummy was just so much bait, and he would sneak up in back of me and take me instead of the bait. The thing to do was to turn the machine-gun around the other way. Then when he came for me I would start firing. I would be standing looking at the bait but at the least noise I would swing around and get the gun working.

"And there in the darkness I waited, and waited, glad that Ferguson was safe in his cabin, and then, just when I felt I simply could not wait any longer, I heard a little swishing sound in back of me. I jumped around and started that damned gun squirting."

"And then what happened?" I asked.

"I stopped the gun and waited. Not a sound. Everything was as black as it could be except for the lantern up by the dummy. I did not have the least idea whether I had hit that monster or only frightened it. I guess I didn't care very much. Here is the peculiar part: I have been through all kinds of hell in my life and it never phased me, but this time I was sick; and I wanted to see Ferguson. It was not the boss especially, just anyone I could talk to. I felt my way down to his cabin. He had a light burning but he wasn't there. Gone! And I was feeling so low that I just locked the door and threw myself down on his bunk. Man, but I felt sick."

"I suppose Ferguson decided to go up on deck during the night and the beast grabbed him?" I asked.

"That was the way I figured it out.

Anyway I stayed there till morning, and then I went on deck. Thought I would have a look around and see if I had hit that sea thing and then start the engine and get out if I could. All I could think of was to get away as soon as I could. Can I have another beer?"

"You certainly can. Now, when you went on deck with the sun shining, what did you find?"

He drank the beer slowly, and then even more slowly said in a whisper:

"I found Ferguson, just about cut in two by the bullets."

"You killed him instead of the monster!"

"Just that. Got jitters and fired at the first noise in back of me, and I guess he never knew what hit him. It was a mess. And now to the end of this story. I managed to start the engine, and raise a few sails, though it took me a long time. But I got out of there, and sailed east, and when I got in sight of the Azores, I set the ship afire and went ashore in a boat. Of course there was an investigation, but I just answered questions, and did not tell the whole story; so finally I was allowed to leave and I took the first tramp steamer back to America."

"And so you never saw the Kraken?"

"No. And I do not think there ever was one."

"What makes you say that?" I asked sharply. "You say those men disappeared. If it wasn't a sea monster, what was it?"

"Ferguson."

"I know you are lying now."

"Knew you would think so. Never told the story to anyone before, 'cause I knew no one would believe me. But Ferguson was a real scientist. He wanted to devote his life to a study of those little animals in the floating seaweed. He knew that no one would willingly stay there month after month with him, but he had to have a crew to get him there. He took me and the gun along to cover up his crime."

"How do you know that? You are practically saying that he killed the men!"

"Am I? Well, I have reason to think so. Why? Because he kept a daily record of everything he did and I found that book in his cabin. He would sneak up behind those men, crush their skulls with a blackjack, tie some lead to their feet and throw them overboard. He did that to the cook when he went out to see why he was late with the meal, and he was going to do it to me, only I outsmarted him. The man must have been insane."

"Sure of all this?"

"Better than sure. He had the blackjack in his hand and his hand up ready to strike when the bullets hit him. Now do I get a night's lodging on that story?"

"It was as though all the evil in Hell looked at me from those eyes!"

By STAFFORD AYLMER

Horrible and strange was the doom that stalked Tamy Challoner round the world—to catch up with him at last, the stolen shrivelled head in his possession!

"WHAT do you think of the matter, Harry? Do you think there's anything in it?"

The silence which followed this question was broken at last by the lounge clock, which solemnly emitted eleven doleful notes.

A sleepy, white-coated waiter, hovering at the door, wondered how much longer the discussion would last. The seven men, all friends, who had, between them, touched most odd corners of the world, had already occupied the lounge of the golf club for over three hours, "and God knows," the waiter thought, "how much longer they will remain."

Harry Challoner called for another round of drinks. For several minutes he regarded his half-smoked Corona meditatively. Of them all, he was the least traveled; but nevertheless, his views were invariably respected.

"I don't quite know what to say," he answered at last. "A lot has both been said, and written, on the subject of Black Magic and voodooism. And while I must confess that I have made no actual investigations into these things, whenever the

subject is brought up I always think of my brother, Bertram."

"Wasn't he the one who spent quite a lot of his time in Basutoland?" asked a tall man, with iron-gray hair. "I seem to remember something about his dying rather suddenly."

"Yes. And it's the matter of his death that inclines me to the view that there's something in this Black Magic business after all."

The others pricked up their ears. All of them had known Bertram Challoner, a wild harum-scarum if ever there had been one. In the words of one of his closest friends, who had stood shoulder to shoulder with him in more than one tight corner: "He was frightened of neither man, God nor devil, the latter least of all."

Most of Bertram's adult life had been spent in the lesser known parts of "Darkest Africa." Every few years, he would suddenly return to England for six or eight months. Then Challoner Towers would wake one morning to find him, and his black servant Nimrod—a huge seven-foot Nubian—vanished completely. Nothing more would be heard of him for perhaps four or five years, when he would reappear as suddenly as he had gone.

Each time he came home he would bring some curio and, but for the ever increasing collection, Bertram's people might sometimes have thought that he did not exist.

Harry took a sip of his gin-and-bitters.

"As you all know," he commenced, "Bertram was always a bit of a mystery to most people, and that included us, too. Many a time I have had him in the library when all the rest were in bed, and tried to pump him about his absences. But he was as close as an oyster—that is, until his last visit. Most of you, I think, have seen his collection of curios—you, Fantwell, are the only one who hasn't; well, come round to dinner one evening. Let's see, how about next Thursday? That do? Right! I'll show you them then. But there are two things that none of you ever have seen, and never will.

"Bertram—or Tamy, as we called him—was, as you all know, a big, strapping fellow. Six feet three, and a fighting weight of just over fourteen stone. That was, until the last time he came home; then he was so changed that I hardly knew him. Usually he was tanned almost black, but that time, his face had lost its healthy hue and was, instead, a dirty ashen-gray. His cheek-bones stuck nearly through the skin, his body was a mere skeleton of skin and bone. As soon as I saw him, I knew something was up, but what it was, and how devilishly it worked, I didn't learn until just before the end.

"ON HIS previous visits, he had arrived with Nimrod, and almost as much luggage as the Shah of Persia. This time Tamy came alone, and had only one small handbag and a big cabin trunk. I asked him where Nimrod was, but he waved the question aside and asked for a drink. That was another thing. He had always been a moderate drinker—not T. T., but—well, you know—have one when he felt like it. Now all he would do was to sit huddled in a chair, with the brandy bottle close at hand; starting to his feet every few minutes. For a day or two he kept to his own room, refusing practically everything. Most of his meals came back untouched, and his continual order was for more and more brandy. Benson—you all know him, had been butler to our family for the Lord knows how long—mentioned the matter to me.

" 'I don't like to speak of it, sir,' he started in his dry voice, that somehow hasn't changed since I was a boy, 'but Mr. Bertram is taking rather an unusual quantity of brandy. He's just rung for another bottle; I thought perhaps you——' "

" 'All right, Benson,' I told him, 'I'll take the bottle to him. Don't worry, I think Mr. Bertram has had a bout of fever or something. I'll see to him.'

"I went to Tamy's room and went in, without knocking. He was sitting close to the fire, and before the door was closed he started to rave and swear at Benson, as he thought. After a while I managed to quiet him, and while we sat talking I seemed to smell something—well, I can't quite describe it. Something—er—sour. No—that wasn't it, and still it was. It was a rank sort of smell, partly like dried sweat, and partly like decaying flesh of some kind."

"Something like a native hut when a chief dies?" put in a man named Collins.

"Yes, that's it! I asked Tamy what it was, and I shall never forget the look in his eyes as he answered me. A terror-stricken, appealing glance it was, as though he had looked into a corner of hell, and lived to tell the tale.

" 'So you can smell it, too? Then the devils are really here. I can't stick it much longer, the swine are driving me out of my mind.'

"For several minutes he raved incoherently, and then pulled himself together.

" 'Lock the door,' he commanded, and when I had done so, he asked me to draw the heavy, velvet curtains. This I did also, wondering, you may be sure, what all the mystery was about. I was then asked to bring him his trunk, and after some trouble —it was no light weight—I managed to get it in front of him. Tamy fished out the key and unlocked the case, swinging it wide open. At once the sour smell became overpowering.

"With trembling hands, he searched in the bottom of the case and brought out a round object wrapped in a piece of native cloth. This he unwound, and disclosed a human head, but nothing like any skull I had ever seen before. The forehead took up half the length of the whole thing, and the skin, which was a dirty brown, was stretched over the bone as tightly as the skin of a drum.

"A wide, flat nose, both nostrils dilated, and showing red on the inside, and hairs almost an inch long growing down from each nostril. The mouth stretched nearly from ear to ear, and five or six cruel-looking fangs grew from the top jaw. The mouth was open in a hideous grin, and there was no tongue! From the mouth, the face receded back to the throat, there being no chin worth calling one. There were two very small ears, pressed close to the head. The back of the head bulged outward and upward, giving it rather the appearance of a rugger ball. A shock of jet-black hair, about a foot long, matted and indescribably filthy, crowned the thing.

"As I looked at it, I could not help but shudder, for it was hideous. I asked Tamy what it was. In fact, I had to ask three or four times before he heard me. When he realized I was talking to him, he placed the thing upright on the table, looking toward us with its blind eyes.

" 'Now, don't laugh, Harry,' he said; 'what I'm going to tell you will sound far-fetched and impossible, but every word is true.'

"For perhaps half a minute he was silent, as though wondering how to start his tale; then he turned to me.

" 'How old do you think that thing,' pointing to the head, 'is?'

"I was dumbfounded, and didn't know what to say.

" 'In what way?' I asked. 'In age; or how long it has been dead?'

" 'Both.'

" 'Well, I don't know anything about that tribe—whoever they are,' I said, 'but I should guess he was somewhere about fifty years old or so. And he's probably been dead a month or so.'

"He shook his head at my answer.

" 'You're a long way out, Harry old boy, in the second guess, although you may be right in the first.' Tamy suddenly became serious and looked at me intently. 'That head belongs to a prehistoric race; in fact, it's the head of what science calls the "missing link," and it's been dead, if you can call it dead, for heaven only knows how many thousands of years.'

I COULD hardly restrain a smile, but Tamy went on.

" 'No, don't laugh, it's the truth. I wish to God it were not! You're wondering where I got it. I'll tell you. Since I was last home, I've been hunted nearly all over the world by a pack of inhuman devils, until I hardly know what to do.

" 'It all started in northern India where I was wandering about as usual. One day, Nimrod and I were instrumental in saving the life of an old native, and he told me how I could, if I wished, get into Tibet, and to the monastery, where, he said, the monks or whatever they were, had a head thousands and thousands of years old. How the old chap knew, I haven't the foggiest idea, but all he told me proved true later. What they actually did with the head, he didn't know, but it was rumored to possess the most uncanny powers imaginable. There is no need for me to tell you all the details, but before he had finished his yarn I had made up my mind to snaffle the head if it was the last thing I ever did.

" 'For a long time Nimrod tried to persuade me not to go, but like a fool, I took notice. I wish to God, now, that I had. However, as I was fool enough to stick out that I was going, he insisted on coming too. I really shouldn't have taken him, he was too big to disguise properly; but I did and he's there somewhere now, poor devil.

" 'I wanted the head to hand over to a scientist pal—thought it would create no end of a sensation—now he'll never get it.'

" 'But why?' I asked.

" 'Because some of those priests are coming for it, and I can't stop 'em.'

" 'Of course you can,' I laughed. 'They daren't break in here and steal the thing.'

" 'Harry, you don't understand! They're not coming in the flesh! Their spirit, soul, call it what you like, will come. I know it, as surely as I know you're sitting there.

" 'To get back to our yarn. I managed to find the monastery and get inside—how, doesn't matter—and saw that,' indicating the head, 'on an altar, right at one end of the place. For a long time I watched the priests; some of them were continually bowing in front of the thing, and asking it questions. I couldn't understand the language, but it answered them! No, I know what you're going to say, but there was no trick. I know the thing has no tongue; nevertheless, sounds came out of its mouth.'

" 'Ventriloquism,' I told him.

" 'No, Harry, you're wrong. I saw the jaws and lips move. There was no jiggery-pokery—the thing spoke, I tell you. I wish I had time to tell you half of what I saw there—it'd make your hair stand up, but I'm afraid there isn't time. Those devils are close at hand now, and they'll strike before long.'

"Tamy reached out and picked up the head. He pushed two fingers into its mouth, and as he did so, I'll swear by all I hold holy, the thing's eyes moved. When Tamy pulled his fingers out, they clasped the biggest ruby I've ever seen. God knows how much it was worth—a king's ransom I'll bet.

"Tamy twisted it about in his hands and then gave the thing to me. As soon as he dropped it into my hand, I had the queerest feeling imaginable, as though all the evil in the world were wrapped up in that blood-red stone.

" 'Keep it, Harry, till I've gone,' Tamy said, 'my end's not far off.'

"I tried to laugh away his fears, but he was so sure, so certain.

" 'It's nearly three years since I got out of Tibet with that thing, and sometimes I almost believe it to be three hundred. The devils found out that it'd gone, an hour or two after we'd started for India. They have followed me half over the world, always keeping just out of sight, but all the same, I know they're there. I tell you, Harry, the thing is driving me out of my mind. Night and day it's the same, always waiting for 'em to strike.'

"For a long time Tamy raved in that strain, and I, knowing it was useless to try to stop him, just sat and listened. When he seemed calmer, I asked him,

" 'What about the ruby?'

" 'That, too, came out of the temple. I shouldn't have thought they'd have missed it. The altar upon which the head stood was covered with a gold cloth embroidered with hundreds of precious stones, each worth a fortune. That one I've just given to you was about the smallest of them all, that was the reason I chose it. Not that it'll do me any good, but you can sell it later on. Meanwhile—come on, let's put it in the safe.'

"Tamy was insistent, and together we went to the safe and locked away the ruby. I kept the key, which is never taken off this chain."

CHALLONER pulled a thin, silver chain from his pocket, on the end of which dangled a single key.

"After a lot more conversation I persuaded Tamy to promise to come away with me. At first he demurred, saying it was useless, and that the priests would get him no matter where he went.

" 'You don't know what devil's powers they possess,' he said. 'They're adepts at the art of Black Magic, and are continually practising their hellish tricks. Listen! While I was hiding in the temple, I was fortunate enough to see one or two incidents of their skill. They believe in, and practise, the projection of their souls into space, and believe, as I do now, that they can will their spirit to any part of the earth, while the body remains in the temple.

" 'It was night, of course, when this affair took place; in fact I was about to collar the head and do a bunk, when the silence of the monastery was shattered by the most unearthly row one could imagine. At the same time two priests entered the temple, one from either side, each carrying a smoking torch. Then a procession appeared, headed by two fellows, evidently the cause of the row, for they each had a long trumpet affair, which they blew into continuously, creating the weirdest sounds I ever heard. Behind these trumpeters came about forty more priests, all in long, trailing cloaks, reaching from their necks down to the ground. Their heads were decorated with feathers, carved pieces of wood, and human bones. Every one had perhaps a dozen skulls strung round his waist, which rattled together as they walked.

" 'It was not so much the bizarre dress that put the wind up me, but the lone, penetrating chant they kept up. It was queer. None of them raised his voice above a loud whisper, but the sound penetrated into every corner of the temple, and gave me the impression that it would, as it was intended, reach the uttermost ends of the earth. I am convinced, Harry, that those fellows were then speaking with some spirits, wandering about the earth free from their bodies.

" 'Another thing. As each man passed the altar, at each side of which stood one of the torch-bearers, he stopped. For ten seconds or so he stared at the head, chanting his damnable dirge the whole time. Then he would raise both arms straight above his head and bow twice, and pass on.

" 'This was kept up until I thought I should have gone stark, staring mad, for

the whole time I had been wondering if they knew I was there or not. Suddenly the trumpeters gave an extra loud blare and stopped. Instantly the whole company ceased their movements and stood perfectly still, and for a short while you could have heard a pin drop. Another priest came into the temple, but, unlike the rest, he was absolutely naked, not having so much as a feather to cover him. Straight to the head he went, raised up his arms as the others had done, and bowed.

" 'A large rug was spread on the floor, before the altar, and the naked priest lay on it—face upward. Then the doleful chanting recommenced, the figures lining up in two rows, one on each side of the rug. The horns blew, and for five minutes the place resembled a corner of hell.

" 'Suddenly the nude priest, who until now had lain perfectly still, gave a convulsive heave. I could see the sweat glistening on his skin, although it was a devilish cold night. His eyes opened and rolled up grotesquely, and from his mouth came a white foam. Then he started to lash about with his arms and legs, until two of the watchers bent down and held his limbs rigid. All at once he gave an unearthly shriek, and it happened! As true as I sit here, Harry, I am convinced that I saw the priest's spirit leave his body; for, suddenly, above him, hovered a thin, white wreath of mist, which curled and writhed, then gradually rose higher and when about ten feet in the air formed itself into a perfectly round ball, from the center of which a human face stared.

" 'The man on the carpet kept up his shrieks until the face appeared, but, as soon as the ball was complete, fell silent. That was the signal for the rest to break out into what I took to be a kind of applause or jubilation. Then the priest moved, rose jerkily to his feet, and slowly, almost like an automaton, walked out of the temple.

" 'When he had gone, I looked for the misty sphere, and found that it, too, had disappeared. All this may sound far-fetched, but believe me, out there, miles from civilization, in the midst of those fanatics, and a white moon shining, it was real enough. The procession formed again and left the temple. I was out of my hiding-place in a jiffy, grabbed the head and that ruby, and left the place as quickly as I could. Nimrod was with me and in our haste, deceived by the moonlight, he misjudged the distance in jumping across a narrow chasm, and down he went, yelling like a madman.

" 'Before I had been alone an hour, I knew that those damned priests had discovered my theft, and that's how all this started.'

"TAMY stopped and huddled down into his chair, trembling from head to foot. Without being asked, I gave him a stiff bracer of brandy. The head was put away and I suggested that I sleep in his room for a few nights, but he wouldn't hear of it. I did, however, get him to promise he would go away for a holiday with me.

" 'Although,' he said, 'I know very well it won't be any use. For over two years I've been on the run; here, there and everywhere, and I might just as well have stayed in Tibet and faced the music. At least it would have been all over by now.

" 'I was a fool; as soon as I knew they were after me, I should have dropped both the head and the ruby. It's been hell all the time, and the week I spent getting back to India was not the worst. I had to travel by night and hide up all day. Dozens of times I resolved to throw myself over the next precipice, but each time something stronger than my own will-power held me back. They wouldn't let me die in my own way; they're keeping me for their own hellish end. What it will be I don't know, but something far more horrible than any-

thing I've gone through yet. No, I've never seen anything, that's the devil of it. I can't see, I can't hear, all the same I know they're there, waiting their time!'

"Well, gentlemen, there was very little more to Tamy's story. The next morning we started out on a long motor tour, just the two of us, and after a lot of argument, I persuaded him to leave that damned head behind.

"We were away from the Towers for nearly four months, and during that time Tamy became a changed man. He could eat again, his face lost its drawn look, and altogether he seemed to have shaken off his oppression. I was congratulating myself on the cure, but before we had been back home two hours, it started all over again, and in a couple of days he was as bad as ever. For hours I argued with him to give the cursed head to some museum, but he refused.

" 'I've got to keep it for those priests," he would insist, 'got to! I'd give anything to let it go, but I just can't. I want to, but it's no use. I daren't do it.'

"However, I took matters into my own hands, and, unknown to Tamy, asked Sir Joshua Beldred, the authority on prehistoric man, to come down. The old boy came, full of excitement. When Tamy discovered who he was, there was the devil to pay. For the whole of one day, Bertram flatly refused to allow Sir Joshua to even look at the head, but at last changed his mind and produced the thing.

"As soon as it was on the table, Beldred was crouching over it, turning it this way and that, pulling the mouth wide open and peering down its throat. Its ears, too, he closely examined, as he did the teeth. When at last he finished and stood up, his eyes were lit up with excitement, and he turned to Tamy.

" 'How much will you take for it?' he asked eagerly, and received a grunt and shake of the head for his answer. He raised his eyebrows and looked at me inquiringly. Well, to cut a long story short, he offered Tamy about forty thousand for the thing. To my surprise the offer was turned down flat. Eventually Sir Joshua realized that Tamy meant what he said, and tried a fresh tack.

" 'Will you allow me to take it to my laboratory for a few days?' he asked, and went on to explain that the head was, he felt sure, all that had been claimed for it, backing up his arguments with a lot of gibberish about the Ice Age, troglodytes and a lot more scientific jargon, none of which I could understand. Tamy swallowed every word avidly and as his theories, one after another, were proved by Beldred, his eyes glowed. All his fears seemed forgotten and he talked quite seriously until dinner. After the meal, Sir Joshua again asked permission to take the head away with him and I added my arguments to his. The result was that Tamy agreed to the scientist's taking the thing with him, but only for a day —no longer.

"Off went the old boy, next morning, the head in his bag, as pleased as punch. Before he had been gone an hour Tamy began to curse and rave, and yell for the confounded thing back again. This of course, was impossible, so I had to do my best to calm him. It was no use, and at bedtime I had to stay in his room. Eventually I got him off to sleep and sat in a chair for forty winks myself.

"ABOUT two o'clock I was roused by an unearthly yell from the bed and saw Tamy standing up, pressed to the wall. If ever I pitied anyone, I did him then. He was terrified and stared glassily at the far wall. I turned, and saw nothing, but I smelled that awful stench that had emanated from the head. Tamy raved—the same words over and over again: 'I haven't got it! I haven't got it!' and each time his voice rose higher, until it became a high-

pitched scream. His eyes were nearly starting out of his head, and he appeared to be fighting for breath.

"This state of affairs lasted for just under half an hour, until Tamy collapsed on the bed. After I had made him as comfortable as I could, I searched the room, every nook and cranny. I didn't know what I was looking for, but anyway I found nothing, except a slight dampness in the far corner, where the stench, which had cleared from the rest of the room, was faintly discernible.

"There was no apparent reason for the dampness, and suddenly I remembered what Tamy had told me he witnessed in the temple. I can tell you, I was scared stiff then! It had taken me about a quarter of an hour to search the room, and it was exactly ten minutes to three. I remember the time precisely, for I looked at my watch, wondering if it was worth while going to sleep again. However, I did drop off, and the next thing I can recall was Benson shaking my shoulder.

"At breakfast I opened my paper and got the shock of my life. Sir Joshua Beldred had been found dead! From the newspaper report I learned that his valet had been roused at three o'clock in the morning by Sir Joshua screaming and had rushed into his room. The place was a shambles, bed-clothes torn to shreds, pillows all over the floor and the scientist himself, lying under the bed, dead.

"My first thoughts were of Tamy's head. However, I need have had no fears on that matter. The police, of course, were called in and made the usual inquiries, but found nothing upon which they could work. An inquest was held and an open verdict returned; the jury could do nothing else. At the inquiry, a witness—I forget who—testified that the floor in the center of the room was covered with damp, but no explanation was offered.

"When Tamy learned of Sir Joshua's death, he nearly had a seizure, his first thought being for the head. Later in the day he had occasion to go to his trunk for something, and believe me or not, gentlemen, that head was there in its original place!

"To say that I was astounded would be putting it mildly. I was flabbergasted! Couldn't make head or tail of the thing. Somebody, or something, had murdered Sir Joshua and had had possession of that infernal head. It must have been some of those cursed priests, but why—I asked myself, bring the damned thing back to us? Tamy and I talked the thing over, and his voice trembled as he said:

"'It's me they want. They know that they can get the head any time they wish and the devils have brought it back to torture me a bit longer.'

"The whole affair was getting on my nerves and I can tell you, gentlemen, that I felt as though I should soon go out of my mind. How Tamy had stuck it for over two years, God only knows!

"Suddenly, I thought of Raymond Hart; you know, the ghost-hunter—psychic investigator, he calls himself. I had heard a lot about him, and thought of asking him to come down. I put the matter to Tamy, who agreed; so I rang Hart up. He promised to come at once and was as good as his word, for in less than three hours, his car rolled up the drive.

"I don't know whether any of you chaps know him?" Harry Challoner looked round the ring of tense faces. "No? Well this was the first time I had ever seen him. Talk about a ghost-hunter, he looked like a ghost himself! Well over six feet and as thin as a rail, he was as near to a human lamp-post as anyone I've seen. To look at him, one would have thought he would scare any ghost. He had a long, saturnine face, as white as death, with a high, intellectual forehead crowned by a mop of jet-black hair. His eyes were deep-set and

piercing, continually roving around as though searching for something. We introduced ourselves to him and then I led the way to Tamy's room.

"Seated in front of the fire, I offered him a drink and a cigar. Hart held up his long, bony hand and in his deep voice said:

" 'No, thank you, Mr. Challoner, not just now. No man appreciates a good cigar and a long whiskey more than I, but until I have heard your brother's story, I do not know what may be required of me, and I desire to keep myself free from stimulants. Tomorrow, when, I hope, everything is over and my work finished, I will join you in both with pleasure.'

"He inclined his head toward Tamy.

" 'Now, Mr. Challoner, tell me everything you can. No, I do not wish to see the head at the moment. That will come later. Don't keep anything back; tell me every detail, no matter how apparently insignificant; it may be upon some small thing you tell me, that the success, or otherwise, of my efforts will rest.'

"TAMY told him all that I have related to you. When he had finished, Hart asked.

" 'Now tell me, when the priest lay naked on the rug, the two men holding him down, did they appear to be just holding his limbs from thrashing about, or'—Hart became very deliberate—'were they holding the body itself down? What I mean is this. Did the man show any signs of rising up from the floor? Take your time to answer and if you positively cannot remember, say so.'

"Tamy looked puzzled, and sat for fully five minutes with his eyes half closed. While talking to Hart, he had calmed down to normal. His eyes had lost their wild look, and his face had relaxed. Hart appeared to have restored Tamy's reason completely. I, too, felt calmer and more self-possessed than I had felt for several hours, and began to pat myself on the back for thinking of the man. At last Tamy answered his question.

" 'Yes, Mr. Hart; now you ask, I'm absolutely certain that just before the two priests held the man's arms and legs, he did rise slightly. Mind you, I was a fair way off, and the light was none too good; nevertheless, I'm sure the body did rise slightly. Maybe not more than a couple of inches, but it moved.'

"Tamy picked up his glass containing a few sips of brandy, but before he could put it to his lips, Hart stretched out his hand.

" 'No, don't drink that, Mr. Challoner. Please!'

" 'Why?'

" 'I'll tell you in a few minutes. Meanwhile, listen to me! I don't know whether you, or your brother, know anything on the subject of Black Magic?' We both shook our heads. 'Well, I shall have to enlighten you a little. Of course, you know what is meant by the term? Now these Tibetan monks, or priests, devote their whole time to the subject, and are considered experts—adepts—in many weird and seemingly incredible practises.'

"Some of them are undoubtedly genuine; for aught we know, they all may be. Western civilization has progressed in many ways, but on the subject which we are discussing, our scientists are as children compared with these people. Their knowledge extends back for a great many generations, and each age adds more to the already immense store. Their two greatest studies are levitation of the body—in other words, the power to raise the body into the air at will without any outside assistance; and the transmission of the soul, or the knowledge of how to send their spirits to any place; having the spirit under control the whole time. Many of our Western scientists refute the idea, but I know there is a great deal of truth in it.

" 'I am convinced, Mr. Challoner, that the monks in the monastery you were so foolish—if I may say so—as to enter, are adepts at both phases. The former does not concern us now; it is with the latter that we have to deal. There is no doubt, from what you tell me, that you are being persecuted and tormented, deliberately, by one of these released souls, and, unless we can successfully combat it, I am positive you will continue to be—how long, I cannot say. Maybe they would keep it up until you killed yourself, or maybe they would tire of it themselves and will the spirit to murder you.'

"Hart must have noticed the incredulous look on my face, for he smiled faintly, showing the edges of his white teeth.

" 'I see that you are skeptical,' he said, 'but what about Sir Joshua Beldred?'

"I could think of no satisfactory answer. Hart then asked to see the head, instructing me to get it, which I did, placing the horrible thing on the table. Tamy reached forward to touch it, but Hart grabbed his wrist.

" 'No. I don't want you to touch it any more until I have done all I can.'

"Tamy nodded, but I could see that his fingers were itching to handle it. Even the sight of the damned thing caused Tamy to shake from head to foot, and it was plain to see that all his old symptoms were returning. Hart put out his hand and held Tamy's fingers in a grip like a vise, and instantly I could see the lad's face relax, as though some power of resistance was imparted to him.

"For a long time, Hart sat and stared intently at the head; then he heaved a long sigh and sat back, apparently satisfied. He opened his lips to speak, and I got the shock of my life.

" 'I think, Mr. Challoner, that I understand all about this head, and can get it to speak.'

"I didn't stare at the man—I goggled, and in my own mind put him down there and then as a charlatan. He must have read my mind, for he said:

" 'I mean that, Mr. Challoner—I really mean it!'

"And by Heaven, he did mean it! Still gripping Tamy's fingers, he leaned forward, stared tensely into the thing's eyes for fully a minute. Then he made a quick motion with his free hand. The eyes moved! All this happened in broad daylight; nevertheless, I felt my skin creep and my blood ran chill. The man was a devil himself!

"HART mumbled an incantation in some tongue unknown to me, and from the fanged, tongueless mouth, a horrible, gurgling sound issued; chilling the very marrow in my bones! It was awful! I'd seen and heard some queer things in my time, but never anything like this. Any doubts I had entertained respecting Hart vanished at that moment and, like Tamy, I put all my faith in him. I could hardly believe my own ears, but there was no doubt about it. Had I not seen the lips move before the sounds came, I should have suspected trickery. But that, I realized, was out of the question. Hart had not touched the thing.

"I watched breathlessly. Hart muttered something in a low, penetrating voice. I can tell you it was uncanny. A man talking to a head, and the damned thing answering him! At last Hart packed the unearthly conversation up, and asked me to take the head away. I did, and as I returned, I heard Tamy say that he could not understand what Hart had been saying, but the language sounded very similar to that used by the priests.

"When I had resumed my seat, Hart said:

" 'You both wondered why I asked Bertram not to drink his brandy a short time ago. This is the reason. One thing we

have learned about Black Magic is that it works much more powerfully when the subject is under the influence, however slight, of alcohol. A bewitched person, however temperate his normal habits, often experiences an unusual craving for stimulants; perhaps you have been conscious of this?'

"Tamy nodded and Hart continued seriously:

" 'Then, Mr. Challoner, I beg of you to resist that craving with all your strength—you are being willed to drink, in order that the work of these devils may be made easier. In any case, since I shall need the co-operation of you both in the task that lies before me, I must ask you to abstain altogether until I have come to grips with this thing and defeated it.'

"He looked at his watch, and then said that time was getting short.

" 'I presume, Mr. Challoner, that this is the room in which you sleep?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'Very good. Now I want you both to listen carefully to what I am going to say. You, Bertram, will go to bed as usual, and try to sleep. I want you, Mr. Harry, to keep watch with me. Perhaps nothing will happen; I don't know, but if anything does occur, you must obey me implicitly. The least false move on your part might mean your death!'

"Hart opened a long, bulky case he had brought with him and took from it a dark cloak, which he threw over a chair, and four or five small, ebony boxes. He looked round, counting the door and windows, and asked to be supplied with four bowls, one for each of the two windows; one for the door, and another for the fireplace.

"From each of his little boxes he took a pinch of some kind of powder and dropped one into each of the bowls, stirring it thoroughly with the blade of his pen-knife. Afterward, he carefully placed the bowls in their respective positions. These preparations and the previous talk had taken up the whole of the afternoon and it was now almost dinnertime.

"Hart joined us in the meal, but ate sparingly, refusing all meat, and drank only cold water. Tamy and I refrained from alcohol, as he had asked us.

"The meal over, we sat and talked on every-day matters for an hour or so. Hart showed a knowledge of practically every subject under the sun, and so interesting was his conversation that I was surprised when the clock struck eleven. Hart jumped up and with a nod to Tamy and myself, led the way to my brother's room.

"At the door he stood for a second, sniffing like a retriever, then apparently satisfied, walked into the room. The door was carefully closed, and bolted behind us, and I noticed that the thoughtful Benson had filled up the coal scuttle, and placed a tray of food and drink ready.

"Hart went to his case, which I was beginning to compare to that of a conjuror—one never knew what would come out of it next. This time he held a bunch of leaves. I don't know what they were, they were the queerest I've ever seen. Each one was a perfect diamond in shape; all were threaded on a thin, flexible wire. These he laid carefully all round Tamy's bed, about two feet from the posts; when he had finished, the bed was standing inside an oblong formed by the wire.

"Into his bowls containing the mysterious powder, he poured a few drops of liquid from a bottle he fished out of his bag. Immediately, a thin spiral of smoke, or vapor, rose and, at a height of about ten feet, vanished entirely. I sniffed at one of these spirals, but could detect no smell. All this had taken a great deal longer to do than it has to tell, and it was nearly eleven-thirty when Hart finally ceased moving about in his stealthy, silent way. He drew the cloak over his clothes, and stood enveloped completely from his

neck downward, only his head protruding. By this time I was getting a trifle uneasy, but Hart reassured me.

" 'I want you to sit in your chair,' he said, 'and keep in it, unless I ask you to move. There's no need to be nervous; you're in no danger whatever. All this,' he waved his hand round the room, 'is, I think, necessary to the success of my experiment, but does not concern you in the least.'

"Somehow, it was not what he said, but the tone of his voice, that set my mind at rest, and I did as he asked, settling myself down comfortably.

"MY BROTHER was already in bed, snuggling down under the sheets, more peacefully than he had done for a long time and, at that moment, our troubles seemed nearly over. I wish to God that things had been as they really appeared. Hart, too, sat in an easy-chair on the opposite side of the fire, his back to the bed. After half an hour, Tamy breathed evenly, and Hart rose, silent as a ghost, and turned off the main light, leaving only a small table lamp burning.

"Two or three hours passed; I could keep my eyes open no longer, and I dropped off.

"There is no need to prolong the story, gentlemen. Nothing happened that night, nor the next. It seemed as though Hart's presence had effectively removed all signs of the spirit, or whatever it was. But on the third night—well, things did happen then, and no mistake!

"Shortly before four o'clock, just as I was beginning to doze, Tamy, who had slept peacefully the last two nights, yelled as though someone were tearing his vitals out, and started to thrash about on his bed. The room gradually filled with that awful, nauseating smell, and I knew that the devils were at work again. Hart seemed to be almost as unconcerned as though nothing had happened.

"Really, now I think, I don't know what I expected him to do. All he did was to stand erect and face one wall, and stare intently. I looked in the same direction, but could see nothing. Tamy yelled again, and I saw Hart's face set grimly.

"Slowly, he commenced to walk to the wall, and examined one particular spot on the floor. For several minutes he stared, and then I saw a faint mist rise in front of him. That was all, but Hart evidently saw more, for his eyes dilated and he drew his eyebrows together. All this time, I noticed that the man kept between the mist and Tamy's bed. Then he commenced to speak. What he said, I have no idea, for he used the same tongue in which he had spoken to the head. For several minutes he kept up the incantation, then produced from some hidden pocket on his cloak a small, triangular piece of wood, beautifully carved, which he held out at arm's length in front of him.

"By this time I could see beads of perspiration on his face, and the hand holding the talisman was shaking like a leaf in the wind. Again he spoke, in a deep, commanding voice, and then retreated a step or two. It was plain to see that the man was exerting all his will-power to force something back, and I was afraid he was losing the duel.

"This went on for quite a while, Hart gradually retreating toward the bed. It was uncanny in the extreme, but after Hart first spoke, Tamy became quiet, and did not make another sound that night. Evidently, the thing was concentrating its power on removing Hart before tormenting Tamy again. As I watched, half-choked by the awful smell, Hart went back and back, until he was within four feet of the bed. Things were getting serious, and I half rose from my chair, but Hart motioned me down again. Five minutes he stood there resolutely, then stepped forward a pace. I saw a gleam of relief show

for a moment in his eyes, and the wooden talisman dropped from his fingers. Then he stretched both arms out in front of him, palms forward as though pushing at something, and in that position he moved across the floor, his eyes staring unblinkingly in front of him until he reached the spot from which he had started.

"He then intoned another incantation, and, though I couldn't understand the words, they sent a chill down my spine, and terrified me more than any of the proceedings up to then. They were, I knew, evil and vile, expressing untold wickedness, but they appeared to work, for suddenly Hart dropped his arms to his sides, and hung his head, looking at me appealingly. I jumped from my chair just in time to catch him as he slid to the floor in a faint.

"HART soon came round, and looked toward Tamy, who was asleep. He stood up and, walking over to the bed covered Tamy up, and stood there for some seconds, his lips moving silently, as though praying. Then he dropped into his chair, buried his face in his hands, and started to shake and tremble.

"It was reaction after the terrible strain, and I poured out a stiff tot of brandy and handed it to him, neat. He gulped it down, and in a few moments had regained his composure. I looked toward the tray Benson had left, and he nodded. In a quarter of an hour every morsel of food had disappeared.

" 'How about one of your cigars?' he asked with a weak smile. He lit up, and then said:

" 'Well, Challoner, that, I am sure, is the end of your brother's trouble. I don't think there will be any recurrence. Of course, in these matters, one cannot be certain, as the power of the other party is always something of an unknown quantity. But as near as it is possible for any man to say, I am confident that I have been successful. However, after I've gone, should there be the least sign of anything of the sort, ring me up at once. Don't waste an instant; because if they do come again, and I am not here, they'll finish your brother at once. I don't want you to be alarmed, but this matter is something far beyond you, and me too, for that matter. By that, I mean that the adepts in the temple have a greater knowledge of the subject than I. Tonight, I don't know whether you realized it or not, was touch and go. I couldn't have held out for much longer, but thank God, I held out long enough.

" 'You know, Challoner, the forces of evil in this world are far greater than most people realize. There are many, many mysteries of which we of the Western world are still in ignorance. And maybe it is just as well.'

"There is no need, gentlemen, for me to repeat all he said; indeed I couldn't, for neither of us slept that night, and all the time Hart talked, explaining as nearly as he could to my untutored mind, mysteries and theories of the occult."

Harry Challoner emptied his glass, and for several seconds sat silent. Round him with tense, eager faces, the others waited breathlessly for him to resume. After a further round of drinks had been served, Challoner selected a cigar, carefully cut it, and lit up.

"There isn't a great deal more to tell," he continued. "Hart left the next morning, refusing a blank check Tamy and I tried to press on him.

"For a few days, it seemed as though Tamy's troubles were over, for he livened up, and in no time was his old self again. He went out with several shooting-parties, made one or two visits to town with me, did the rounds there, and became gradually the harum-scarum Tamy of the old days.

"We had once or twice discussed the

head and its ultimate fate, but decided on nothing definite. I tried to persuade Tamy to pack the damned thing straight off to some museum, but he kept putting it off. The ruby, too, came in for its share of attention. Once or twice we had taken it out of the safe, talked about it, and tried to estimate its value. Neither of us was any judge of precious stones, however, and we decided to let some dealer make an offer. One thing I was sure off; that is, the thing was worth more than would have kept us in comfort for the rest of our lives.

"But we delayed too long, so it's no use grumbling now. It was not to be sold! Fate decreed that it should just lie in the safe until it was too late. The peaceful state of affairs that prevailed then was too good to last, and exactly ten days after Hart left, the trouble started again.

"I first noticed Tamy at lunch. One minute he was laughing and joking with the rest of us, and the next, he looked round at the wall, and jumped up from the table. I followed him out of the room; his face again had that damned, haunted look. I had no need to speak.

" 'They're here again, Harry,' he said, 'and this time my number's up.'

"I tried to laugh away his fears. 'I'll get on the 'phone to Hart,' I told him.

" 'It's no use, old boy; you'll not get hold of him. Don't ask me how I know, because I can't tell you. I know it's true. I've got a feeling here,' he tapped his chest, 'that tomorrow by this time I'll be dead.'

"I didn't ask Tamy, but went straight to the phone. The exchange said they would ring me when an answer was received, and for ten minutes I was like a cat on hot bricks. At last the ring came, and I grabbed the phone. Hart's man-servant was on the other end, and with a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach I learned that Hart was away from home. The man's next words were more hopeful. Mr. Hart, he said, had left his telephone number in case he was wanted. I rang the number, and learned that Hart had been staying there, but had left that afternoon by road, for London.

"For the rest of the day I rang up Hart's flat continually; until just after six o'clock the man told me that Hart would not be home that night, he was sure, as he detested motoring at night. I had to give it up as hopeless, and tell Tamy I couldn't locate Hart. He didn't seem at all disturbed, just remarked:

" 'I told you so, Harry. It's no use trying to stop 'em, the inhuman devils! All I hope is that they get it over quickly.'

"I'll never forget the look the poor kid gave me. He was even then terrified almost out of his mind, and knew that worse was yet to come, but still he tried to smile. If ever a man met a hellish death bravely, Tamy did. God! It makes my blood boil to sit here and think of those swine tormenting and hounding a man to death like that. Maybe I'll meet 'em in hell, and then there'll be a reckoning." Challoner's voice was low and deadly.

"The evening slowly passed, the last Tamy was to spend in this world, and as he left the library to go to his room, I could see tears, not of terror, in his eyes. For several seconds he stood in the doorway, looking over the familiar room in which he had spent so many happy hours. Then, with a sigh, he tore himself away, and walked slowly, like a man going to his doom, along the hall, and up the stairs. In his room he drew a chair to the fire and sat down. I tried to persuade him to go to bed, but he refused.

" 'No. I'll die with my boots on,' he said, 'and not in bed.'

"It was useless insisting, so I, too, sat down and waited. Eleven o'clock came . . . twelve . . . one, and nothing happened. Then—the smell!—faintly at

first, gradually growing stronger, until it filled the whole room, almost choking me.

"Tamy just sat there, growing more terrified with every passing minute; his eyes all the time roving round the room—searching, and dreading what he knew he would see.

"An hour passed, the smell all the time getting worse. It was hell, just sitting there helplessly, waiting for I knew not what.

"Suddenly Tamy yelled, his eyes glued to one corner of the room. It was a soul-chilling cry of absolute fear, such as a man might make who looked into the furthermost corner of Hades. I jumped to my feet intending to investigate the corner, but Tamy grabbed me and, with a strength I never believed him capable of, pushed me back into the chair.

" 'Don't move, Harry,' he said, his teeth chattering; 'the fiends'll not touch you. It's me they want. Me! Me!'

"His voice rose to a screech, until I thought my ear-drums would split. Then I saw the mist beginning to form. Wispy and thin at first, it gradually became thicker until it filled the corner, and with it came that cursed smell, stronger than ever. Higher it rose from the floor, Tamy staring fixedly, like somebody under a hypnotic spell, at a point about ten feet in the air.

"Gradually, the mist rose from the floor and thickened higher up, until a perfectly round ball was formed, which hovered, motionless, in the air. Then I saw—God! what did I see?—a face, half human, half devil, materialize in the middle of the fog. Slowly it became more distinct—the most hideous sight I ever beheld! A perfectly round face, all eyes and mouth! Two black, staring eyes were fixed on Tamy. Its mouth was gaping in a devilish grin, baring two rows of long, yellow teeth, over which a blood-red tongue licked, gloatingly.

"I COULD not restrain myself, and threw a tumbler straight at it. The glass passed right through and shattered itself on the wall, and for a second those terrible eyes were turned on me. In that second, my heart stood still, and my blood froze in terror. It was as though all the evil in hell looked at me from those eyes. I couldn't move. I couldn't speak. I couldn't even drag my own eyes away. They were held there fixedly, try as I might to turn them away.

"Then the thing looked back at Tamy, bringing forth another howl of terror. Suddenly, Tamy jumped up and went to his trunk. I knew what he was after. The head! I tried to rise from my chair to stop him, but my limbs seemed paralyzed, I was unable to move, and I had to sit there helpless, terrified, and just watch.

"In a few moments he was back with the cursed head in his two hands, held out in front of him. He started to rave.

" 'It's there! It's there!' he screamed time after time. 'Take it, you hellions! Take it!'

"He stood it on the table, and as God is my witness, the undead thing grinned at Tamy, its gaping mouth extending nearly from ear to ear, and its eyes turned upward to the face in the mist. How long this lasted I've no idea—I was out of my mind, and time meant nothing. Tamy raved and cursed like a maniac, taking no notice of me whatever. His eyes were red-rimmed and bloodshot. His jaws worked convulsively.

"Poor devil, he was being terrified to death, while those two hellions looked on. At last Tamy shrieked in agony and fell back on to the floor, fighting something I couldn't see.

"Suddenly, most of his body was blotted out by something, although I couldn't see what it was. Then the thing moved and spread until I could see nothing of him. Heaven only knows what was happening,

for the kid fought and shrieked like a devil in torment.

"All at once the thing seemed to leave him, for the whole of his body came into view at once. Across his chest and arms were long, ugly slashes in the flesh, and streaming with blood. Tamy still struggled and then, with a despairing, agonized look at the hellish face in the air, he put his two hands up to his neck. He turned them palm upward, put his fingers at the nape of his neck, and stuck his two thumbs into his wind-pipe. He was strangling himself!

"I tried to shout, but my tongue refused to move! I couldn't get up, I couldn't move a finger. I had to sit and watch my brother being willed to choke himself to death. It was ghastly!

"Soon it was over; for several minutes Tamy rolled about in agony, trying, I could see, to tear his strangling fingers from his throat, but they were held there by a will-power stronger than his. His struggles were soon over, his shrieks died down to groans; then with a sudden heave, jerking his body from the floor, he gave a long gurgle, and lay still, his fingers locked round his throat in a death grip.

"I think I must have fainted, for everything went black, and I came round, to find the fire out, and daylight breaking through the sky. I dragged myself to my feet and went to Tamy. His face was distorted out of all recognition, his tongue was black and swollen, but the slashes on his body had disappeared! Not a sign of them!

"I lifted him on to the bed, set the room in order, and then swallowed a tumblerful of neat brandy. I looked for the head. It was gone! Vanished! In the corner was a slight dampness. I went to the safe and found that the ruby, too, had gone! And that was the end of both the devilish things. I searched everywhere, but they had disappeared completely, and I've never seen either of 'em since, and have no desire to."

In the silence that followed, Challoner stood up, his face set grimly.

Without another word he walked unsteadily from the lounge.

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By AUGUST W. DERLETH

Treat the old legends with respect . . . And if you should hunt for hidden gold—beware that you do not dig up doom for treasure trove!

MARTIN WEBLY was not the best choice for the parish at Millham, in the south country: a bustling, officious man of medium height, better than medium weight, with a glint in his eye and determination apparent in the set of his jaw. The parish, however, had been spoiled almost into oblivion by the kindly ministrations of old Dr. Williamson, Webly's predecessor; that he had left finances in a deplorable state was not to be held against him, however much of a problem this might afford the new vicar. Indeed, there were certain people in the parish who held that a problem of this magnitude might be a good thing to help make smoother the edges of the Reverend Mr. Webly. Some regret was manifest.

However, there he was, and there in Millham he meant to stay.

He was not married, but he had a housekeeper, a gardener, and occasionally hired a chauffeur. He took complete possession of the vicarage, and within a fortnight conducted himself as if he had always lived there. Within that fortnight, too, the vicar had got himself thoroughly informed in regard to the financial problems of the parish. He was not pleased and said so in his next sermon; moreover, he said, "something must be done," speaking with such a positive air that several of his listeners were rudely jolted from their lethargic acceptance of the status quo. After due consideration of the enormity of the problem, coupled with a knowledge of the inability of the parish to raise funds, they settled back again to wait for the Reverend Mr. Webly's solution to the problem.

They were kept waiting a scant ten days before the vicar announced his solution.

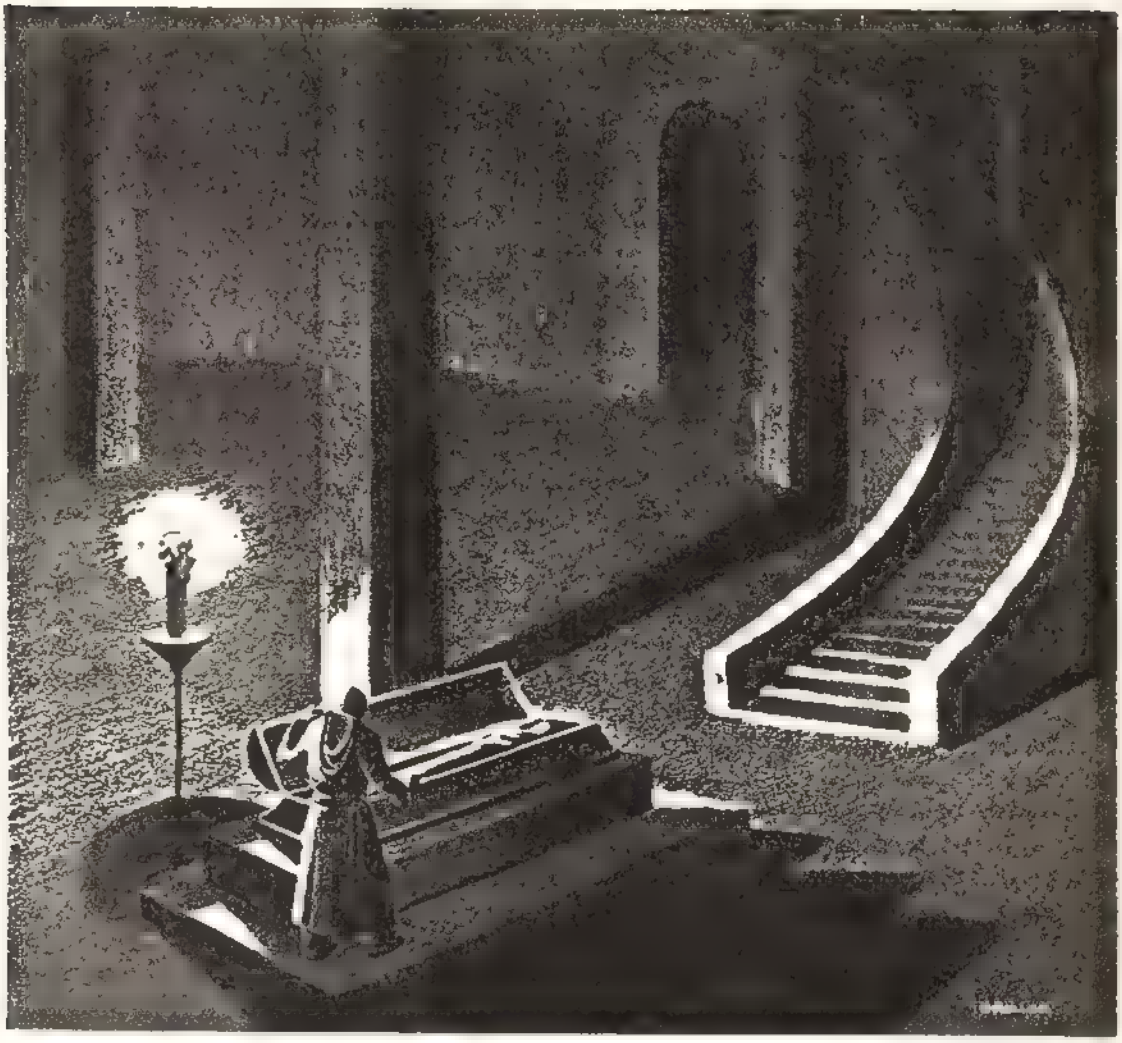
He had come upon certain old papers, he said, which indicated that a treasure had been buried in the tomb of Nicholas Millham, posthumously knighted three centuries ago, and he proposed to investigate the tomb forthwith, beginning the second Monday following, and he preferred that his assistants should come from the parish.

It was an unheard of and impossible solution. In the first place, everyone had been aware of this legend for a long time, and no one had ever done anything about it. Why not? demanded the vicar. Because of the belief in certain local legends, for one thing; because it was thought irreverent for another; because there was a reasonable doubt about the supposed treasure. Martin Webly was adamant; he thrust forth his jaw, beetled his eyes, and said that he would tolerate neither superstition nor any other nonsense, and the parish had better understand that from the start.

ON THE following Sunday, old Sir Basil Hether, who was the local authority on everything from pottery to astronomy, was shown into the vicar's study. He was faintly apologetic, but rather more distant in his manner than apologetic.

"I came to see you about the Millham tomb," he said.

"The vicar revealed Sir Nicholas Millfham's remains, a small casket of jewels, and a thick mass of musty dust . . ."



"We begin Monday week," said the vicar cheerfully.

"So I heard. But of course, you can't do it, you can't open it, you know very well there's a curse on it."

The Reverend Martin Webly fingered his jaw patiently and then took up some old papers which lay not far from his elbow on his desk. "Yes, yes," he said, a little scorn in his voice. "That curse. Let me see, I believe it's here somewhere—a copy of it, that would be. Yes, here it is."

Hether extended his hand for it and opened it slowly, carefully, with a certain respect for old things. He peered attentively at the script. "It seems properly clear," he said thoughtfully. "The Latin is easily translated, and you are warned that any disturbance of the tomb will give you grievous trouble."

The Reverend Mr. Webly took the old paper back and looked at it with pursed lips and narrowed eyes out of which his skepticism showed plainly. "I'm glad you find it so clear," he said. "I fail in that. 'Who dares disturb this tomb releases unto death my companion and now his'," he read. "That's a free translation, isn't it?"

Hether nodded. "And clear enough, too, I should say."

Webly made no comment. He put the paper down and crossed his hands on his paunch, eyeing the old man with ill-concealed impatience. "Nevertheless, Monday we begin work. I don't anticipate that it will take us very long. And if the men make any kind of trouble about this superstition, I'll take a hand myself."

Hether brightened visibly. "That might not be so bad, then," he said reflectively. "As I understand the curse, it applies only to the disturber of the grave; so you are not really loosing any menace upon the parish."

Webly ignored this thrust and asked about the legends which existed about Nicholas Millham. He had heard hints, of course, but few people wished to speak of the old man. What was there about him?

Hether, however, had no inhibitions. He could say quite readily what there was about Sir Nicholas Millham. The old man had practiced demonology, and there were any number of queer events which had been attributed to him in the absence of any other explanation. And then there was, of course, the matter of his death; he had apparently had some foreknowledge of that, and had had the tomb erected and the curse put on it just a week before he was killed in an accident.

Webly had some difficulty restraining himself. He reminded his visitor that this was, after all, the twentieth century, not the dark ages. "But you've said nothing about Millham's companion to which he so cryptically alludes," he went on. "I presume he did have a companion—or is that presuming too much?"

If Sir Basil Hether was aware of the vicar's sarcasm, he chose to overlook it. "Oh, yes, several. But his favorite was a large black dog, named Daemos, and the story goes that of dark nights the villagers could hear the old man's voice calling his dog—'Here, Daemos! Here, Daemos'!"

"What a queer name for a dog!"

Hether rose to go. "Oh, not at all," he said benignly. "When you consider the root of it in the Greek, and its subsequent use in our own language: *daimon* to *daemon* or *demon*. I dare say Millham had a sense of humor."

The Reverend Mr. Webly mentally reserved to include Sir Basil Hether among those destined to receive the benefit of his prayers and showed him out, unmindful of the old man's dubious mutterings and head shakings. The vicar was a practical man; he permitted Hether's "I really wouldn't do it! I wouldn't sanction it!" to pass from his mind even more swiftly than the old man passed from his sight down the lane to where his car stood waiting.

ON MONDAY week the work was begun, everyone exercising the utmost care, so that no damage might be done. The vicar told himself and his parishoners that he was not a vandal. Nevertheless, he had to import workmen from outside; without saying so in so many words, old Hether had given him to understand that he would have difficulty with local workmen, and he had been right. The vicar got outside help, preached a sermon on the evils of superstition, and devoted his attention to the matter of the Millham tomb. He was eager to discover now how great the treasure would be, and whether it would pay the parish's debt, which would please his superiors very much and make his own chances for advancement so much greater. He did not at the moment consider the possibility of his advancement to another plane.

By Wednesday, the coffin was ready for its opening, and the vicar, true to his word, came from his study and opened it. He revealed Sir Nicholas Millham's remains, a small casket of jewels, and a thick mass of musty dust, which slithered like a cloud

of fog over the edge of the coffin and vanished. One glance at the jewels was enough to convince the Reverend Mr. Webly that the parish's financial problem had been solved for the time being. He could not keep from returning to his study and telephoning old Hether to impart something of his triumph to him.

Sir Basil was not enthusiastic. Indeed, he was curiously restrained, so that the vicar had the uncomfortable impression that he was talking to a listener who sat annoyingly waiting for the end of a story which had already patently ended.

The vicar's triumph, however, was not to be dampened. He announced a special thanksgiving service for that evening, and preached a long sermon on the ways of Providence, despite the fact that the majority of his parishioners were not present. Old Hether was there, and several strangers, summoned no doubt by the unusual ringing of the bells, and curious about the whispered tales already making their way over the countryside about the vicar's find. The vicar had a few uneasy moments, until he could reassure himself that the jewels were safely locked up where no strangers were likely to find them; the only individual who might demand more information than he cared to impart to his parish was the tax collector for the Crown, and he was certainly not among those present.

Being practical and methodical, the vicar made a conservative estimate of the treasure's worth, and reckoned that, with care, there might be a small fund left over after the parish debt had been paid. It was while he was doing this late that night in his study that the telephone rang and old Hether's voice came over the wire to inquire whether the vicar was still all right.

"Of course, I'm all right. What do you mean?"

"Forgive my curiosity," murmured Sir Basil. "I told you I was superstitious. By the way, if you should need me—my telephone is next to my bed."

The vicar made short work of him; he was not kind. When he put down the telephone he was convinced that he had better plan to give an entire series of lectures upon the evil effect of superstition. If he had been irritated by the curious, stolid refusal of his parish workmen to assist at the opening of the tomb, he was even more disquieted and angered by the persistent stupidity of a man like old Hether, who ought to be about setting a good example rather than upholding the error of these country ways. The vicar, clearly, was from the city; he had come out of Whitechapel, which was not a savory environment. Having seen a good deal of the rawer side of life, he had a natural tendency to be irate about those needless beliefs which always work to make the lot of a poor yokelry more difficult.

When he put out the light and went to bed, the vicar's mind was occupied with sonorous and rather pompous lines deriding the folly of superstition.

HE WAS awakened in the night by what he thought at first was rain against the window pane; but, as he came more fully to his senses, he recognized it as a *snuffling* sound—the kind of sound an animal might make. At the same time he was conscious of a veritable bedlam in the village; it seemed to him that every dog in the countryside was barking furiously, madly, as if something frightened or angered them. He turned over on his side and listened intently; the snuffing sound was repeated.

It was manifestly ridiculous that any kind of animal could be snuffling at his window. The vicar slept on the second floor, and the walls went straight down to the ground, with not even a vine up which something might crawl, much less the roof of a veranda. Yet, there it was, a peculiar,

persistent snuffing, accompanied from time to time by an oddly muted whine or growl, and set all the time against that wild barking in the background. He got up at last, irritated, and went over to the window.

The window looked out upon the lane and the corner street-light. Almost the first thing he saw was a man standing there; he stood a little in the shadow, and yet his face was clearly visible—a long, dark, saturnine face, with dark pools for eyes, not exactly a young man, and yet not seeming old except in the curious parchment-like quality of his gaunt features. It was not someone the vicar knew.

While he stood looking, the vicar observed that the stranger under the light was not alone; a large dog bounded out of the vicarage yard and came quietly to his side. It seemed to the vicar with a curious kind of thrill that man and dog both turned and looked for a moment intently at the window from which he peered outward before they turned and vanished in the dark direction of the churchyard.

"What a strange thing!" murmured the vicar.

He stood there a little longer and was conscious presently that the bedlam of barking had ceased. It did not occur to him that the barking had stopped in approximately the time it would have taken the watcher and his dog to reach the churchyard. In some respects, the vicar was unimaginative; if he had thought enough of old Hether to give him a ring on the telephone, he might have spared himself certain unpleasant experiences.

It was maddening, but from that evening, everything seemed to go wrong. The bishop took him to task for opening the tomb without first investigating every other avenue of raising money and without having the parish convinced of the right to open it. "A form of desecration all the more to be deprecated since it was done purely for material gain," wrote the bishop. There went the Reverend Mr. Webly's chance for immediate advancement. Before noon, his gardener quit, coming into the study and putting his case very stolidly.

"Seein' as how the dogs do bark, and you know what that means, Reverend Zur."

"Why, no, what does it mean?" demanded the vicar truculently.

"Strange dogs about, there be, zur."

"Indeed!"

The vicar paid him and sent him off, not without rancor. It was being borne in upon him painfully that a man even of his standing could not educate people hidebound by all manner of legend and lore simply by denying the existence of their beliefs.

And before the day was out, there was, as might have been expected, old Hether. The vicar was obviously in no mood to see him, but there he was, coming as if he expected to be welcomed by open arms.

"Hear the dogs last night?" asked Hether.

"Who didn't?"

"Thought you might have heard 'em. So did I. Thought it might put you to thinking a bit."

" 'What fools these mortals be'!" quoted the vicar pointedly.

"Quite so," agreed Sir Basil cheerfully, producing an old leather book. "Brought you a book I thought you'd like to see. Picture of old Millham in it."

The vicar took the book, glancing at its title: *South Country Demonology*. He opened it to the picture and gazed at the countenance of Nicholas Millham. He had instantly the singular sensation of looking upon someone familiar, but he could not place him. He frowned briefly before handing the book back.

"That black dog beside him was supposed to be his familiar. Of course you're aware of the legend about practitioners of the black arts and their demon companions, who took odd forms, but quite often that

of a black dog," old Hether went on.

"I've seen that face somewhere before," said the Vicar.

"Then you've seen the book, too, eh?"

"Oh, no."

"Must have. This is the only place Millham's portrait occurs. Never been reprinted, as far as I know, and the book's rare."

Their conversation was not pleasant.

IT WAS not until Sir Basil had gone that the vicar remembered where he had seen that strange gaunt face before—it was the face of the nocturnal watcher under the street-light in the lane!

"What a curious coincidence!" he thought. It was a pity that the vicar was conditioned to think in platitudes.

That evening he made the mistake of working late in the church; though the work he had to do there could have been done any time, it was possible that the vicar obstinately pursued this course because Sir Basil Hether had none too subtly hinted that it might be well if the vicar stayed inside after dark.

When he came out, on his way to the vicarage, he was immediately aware of the wild barking of the Millham dogs, the same mad volume of sound which had assaulted the usually quiet country darkness on the previous night. Looking around him from the comparative security of the church steps, he made out a figure standing at the entry to the churchyard just beyond. He thought briefly of old Hether's ridiculous hints, and reflected that in any case, it was rather late to be considering them.

He went down the steps and up the lane to where the lights of the vicarage shone out. A man's voice was raised in a shout behind him, and he thought with a warm pleasure how pleasant it was to hear the familiar voices of countrymen in the deepening darkness of nights—men in the fields, men on their way home, men with lanterns looking for lost lambs or calves. Even as he thought this, he was aware suddenly of the words that reached his consciousness. He could not believe the evidence of his own ears—a man's voice calling insistently, with a strangely ominous quality: *"Here, Daemos! Here, Daemos!"*

Frightened now, he turned.

He had a fleeting glimpse of a great black hound with red eyes bounding toward him, its mouth slavering, its outline no less distinct than the aspect of earth seen dimly through its dark body—and behind it, coming swiftly as the wind, the tall black-cloaked stranger, his face demoniac in its saturninity, the face of the dead Nicholas Millham. Then the hound was upon him, and he went down with the furious wild barking of the village dogs still ringing in his ears.

ONE of the vestrymen found him shortly after midnight. The vicar was not a pleasant sight, with his throat torn out, and many lacerations apart from the severing of his jugular. At the inquest, the coroner's jury decided that the Reverend Mr. Webly had come to his death in an unfortunate encounter with a stray dog, "of some considerable size."

Sir Basil Hether, however, took no chances. Having satisfied himself that the curse on the Millham tomb applied only to the opening of the tomb itself, and not to the removal of the jewels, he nevertheless repaired to the proper quarters and had an elderly gentleman publicly in very bad odor as the practitioner of certain unmentionable arts come down from London and seal the tomb again, with incantations and exorcisms.

Being a man with a healthy regard for country lore, he did not forget to have the Millham curse put back upon the tomb for any future Webly who might dare to show his scorn for the beliefs of the local yokelry.

Rustic Interlude

AFTER an all-too-long absence, Greye La Spina is back with us once again. And from Quakertown, Pa., she writes us:

I've been spending several years on a farm and went into it off the deep end, wearing overalls, running a tractor, raising poultry, dogs, goats and pheasants. I've learned some curious and interesting things that don't belong in this letter. As I had to neglect writing while farming, I finally dropped the latter because my typewriter called me back to my very own work again.

I am by nature an inveterate experimenter. My hobby is weaving. Just now I have two big looms living with me and two smaller ones visiting me. I cannot make the same thing twice on my looms; every article has to be unique in itself which is tough on people who'd like to order six guest-towels but know I'd definitely refuse to make more than one of a kind. For the same reason I range from portieres, window-drapes, cushion covers, modernistic table runners to large and small bags, peasant aprons, Italian towels with gaudy wide borders of gay cotton. Although it takes more time and effort, I prefer "free weaving" which enables me to make up my own pattern and reproduce it on a loom.

This experimental nature of mine crops out when I write. I enjoy doing a story my own way even if it falls outside the regular rules. Sometimes I get away with it and sometimes I don't. But I do have fun. The Rat Master was suggested by something ominous about the bold rats we have at Windy Knoll, in beautiful Bucks County, Pa. One of them sat on its haunches on my barn floor, in a beam of light from an electric torch, and bared its teeth at me with such menace that I couldn't get the red, glittering eyes out of my mind until I'd put something on paper that had to do with rats and—yet—something *more* than rats.

In *The Rat Master* my experiment was to produce first of all an atmosphere of mounting apprehension, subtly rising in its suspense. This must become so powerful that my readers must be gripped by it sufficiently to read on to the climax. The introduction of the Rat Master and the Black Magician must wait until the very end. Because I steadfastly believe that Light will always conquer Darkness, the situation is climaxed by showing that in the lowest of creatures there frequently is a responsive chord to what is highest in human beings. That note runs through all I've ever written.

I hope W. T. readers will enjoy my experiment.

The "Fantastic" Frank

From Washington, D. C., Frank Moulton writes:

Practically since I could read I have been an ardent detective fan, and left fantasy severely alone. But about a year ago I happened to see Frank Gruber's name on the cover of WEIRD TALES—July, 1940, I think it was. And as he is a great favorite of mine, I bought the magazine. Not only did I thoroughly enjoy his tale *The Golden Chalice,* but most of the other stories in the issue rang the bell too. So I bought the next issue, and the one after that . . . and since then I haven't missed a number.

And I want you to know that Frank Gruber's second story, *The Book of the Dead,* was swell, and much better, I thought, even than *The Golden Chalice.* I'm getting so I prefer Frank's *weird* tales to his detective yarns!

Well, here's a long life, and a haunted one, to WEIRD TALES!

What Is Buddhism?

The Buddhist Brotherhood of America, writes from Brooklyn, N. Y.

The following article may interest some of your readers who have written in, asking for fact articles about "Oriental Philosophy and Occultism."

"Buddhism—misunderstood by thousands of

Westerners—was founded by Gautama, an Indian Prince. The term Buddha, translated from sanskrit, means Awakened One or Enlightened One. Buddhism was first expounded twenty-five centuries ago and is the most perfect system of thought yet recorded by man from the secret archives of nature.

"Buddhism has three aspects, the philosophical, the scientific and the religious. Many see only the religious, or dogmatic side. Some see only the scientific and philosophical side, while others regard each aspect as part of the great jewel and embrace it all. It creates, in those who have embraced it, spiritual joys which equal and perhaps surpass those experienced by adepts of all other doctrines.

"Buddhism has been received by both savage and civilized races in the East and in the West. A doctrine of such wide acceptance by individuals of different characters and circumstances, Buddhism has controlled the lives of thousands of millions during twenty-five hundred years, and comes nearest to Christianity in the purity of its morals and benefits it proposes to confer upon the human race; it is certainly worthy of careful attention.

"In various Eastern countries, Buddhism has been polluted with superstition by the ignorant masses who are incapable of understanding and raising themselves to its heights.

"Buddhist doctrine does not speak of God, nor a divine revelation. The pure doctrine has no dogma and prescribes no ritual, but advocates a complete liberty of examination and thought. It has no place for either speculation or metaphysics, each is at liberty to decide the question for himself. If Buddhism can be termed a religion, it must be admitted that as a religion it does not ask its followers to give up the right of exercising their intellectual and critical faculties. 'I quoth the following from the words of the Buddha.'

" 'Whatsoever, after personal experience and investigations, is found to agree with your own reason and trends to serve your own well-being as well as the well-being of all other living beings—that cleave to as truth and shape your life in accordance therewith.'

"The Buddha was not afraid to trust the human mind nor was he afraid of appealing to human reason.

"The doctrine stands nearest to and farthest from Christianity. In its extent, it is one of the world's greatest faiths and includes four-tenths (nearly one-half) of the world's population."

Clark Ashton Smith—His Life and Letters

OUR readers are always interested in details of the lives and backgrounds of their favorite authors. The *Auburn Journal*

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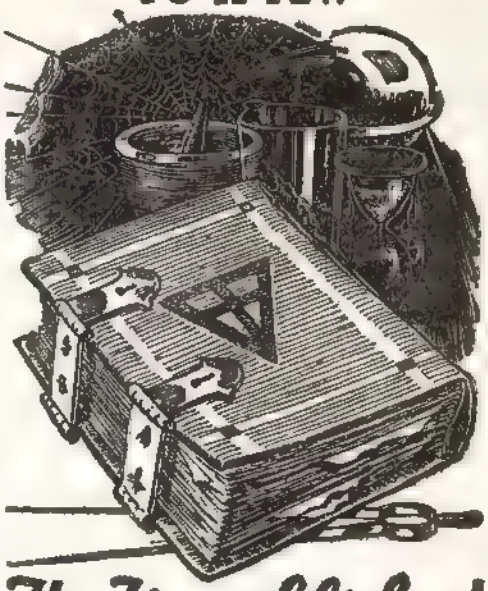

The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE are some things that can not be generally told—*things you ought to know*. Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for *personal power* and *accomplishment* in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of *the hidden processes of man's mind*, and *the mastery of life's problems*. Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

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recently ran an interesting story on the work and career of Clark Ashton Smith, and we thought you would like to read it. Clark Ashton Smith has written continuously for WEIRD TALES since practically the first issue of the magazine, and we are planning to run another story by him soon.

Clark Ashton Smith began to write fiction at the age of 11, and verse at thirteen. He is wholly self-educated, apart from five years in the grammar grades. He was offered a Guggenheim scholarship but refused it, preferring to conduct his own education. His ancestry, consisting mainly of Norman-French Huguenot and English Cavalier blood, may perhaps explain his lifelong record as a rebel and noncomformist. At seventeen he sold stories to The Black Cat and Overland Monthly, but soon became completely engrossed in poetry. His first volume, published at nineteen, caused him to be hailed by critics as a youthful prodigy superior to Chatterton, Bryant and Rossetti. Its publication, however, was followed by eight years of ill-health: a nervous breakdown and incipient tuberculosis. Throughout this harrassing period he wrote the poems for Ebony and Crystal, which have been compared to Hugo and Baudelaire. He was a protege and close friend of the late George Sterling, and a friend and correspondent of H. P. Lovecraft in later years. He recommenced story-writing as a profession when past thirty-five. The End of the Story, published in WEIRD TALES, was his first outstanding success with fiction. It was followed quickly by many others, all in the genres of the weird, macabre, fantastic and pseudo-scientific. Some of his translations from Baudelaire have been included in an anthology of The Flowers of Evil privately printed by the Limited Editions Club of New York with numerous illustrations by Jacob Epstein, the famous London sculptor and artist. He has published one pamphlet of tales, The Double Shadow and Other Fantasies, and four volumes of verse: The Star-Treader, Odes and Sonnets, Ebony and Crystal, and Sandlewood. He is preparing three new volumes of verse. He has contributed poetry and fiction to 40 or 50 magazines, including The Yale Review, London Academy, London Mercury, Munsey's Philippine Magazine, Asia, Wings, Poetry, The Lyric West, Buccaneer, Weird Tales, Ainslee's, 10 Story Book, Live Stories, The Wanderer, The Recluse, The Thrill Book, Amazing Stories, Wonder Stories, Astounding Stories, Strange Tales, The Sonnet, Interludes, and the old Smart Set under Mencken, and his poems have also found place in a dozen or more anthologies, among them Brigg's Great Poems of the English Language, Continent's End, and a British anthology issued by the Mitre Press, London. His tales have been reprinted in one of the Not at Night English story anthologies, and in Today's literature, a collection used for supplementary reading in junior colleges. Some of his early

poems have long been used in Californina school readers. Out of 107 short stories and novelettes written, he has sold 99 to magazines and expects to sell nearly all of the remainder. He is also a painter and sculptor, and has exhibited many of his outre and exotic pictures and carvings at Gump's in San Francisco. His paintings have been ranked above those of Odilon Redon, the celebrated French symbolist artist, and have drawn high praise from Parisian art-reviews. His sculptures, mostly cut from strange and unusual minerals, have been compared to pre-Columbian art and have found numerous purchasers. In addition to his four arts, Smith was a journalist for several years, and has worked off and on at several manual occupations, has picked and packed fruit, has chopped firewood, has typed bills, has mixed and poured cement, and has been a gardener, and a hard-rock miner, mucker and windlasser. He has been acclaimed by a small but growing audience as the great living poet, and thousands of readers have ranked his tales with the best of Poe and Dunsany. His poems range in theme from the cosmic sublimities and immensities to the most delicate ardors and tenderness of love. He claims to possess powers of magic, mesmerism, psychoanalysis, and prophecy. He springs from titled lineage, being the descendant of Norman-French counts and barons and Lancashire, baronets, and Crusaders. His paternal grandfather, a wealthy millowner of Lancashire, married into the old and noted Ashton family, one of whom was beheaded for implication in the Gunpowder Plot. His mother's family, Gaylords, came to New England in 1630; their name was originally Gaillard, and being Huguenots, they fled from France at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, settling in Devonshire, where the name was Anglicanized. Many of them have been Congregational ministers. Smith's father, Timeus Smith, was a world-traveler in his earlier years but settled in California, where he suffered long years of continunal ill-health. Smith lives on the outskirts of Auburn. Still young at 48, he feels that his best work is yet to be done.

Olden Time Fantasy Fans Forecast Modern-Day Blitzkrieg!

Well known are Jules Verne's "fantasies" of submarines and aircraft. And most of us have read H. G. Wells' uncannily accurate descriptions—years before they came about—of radio and other modern marvels. But it is astounding and truly weird that the not so vain imaginings of long ago "fantasy fans" should have forecast Hitler's blitzkrieg!

As early as the sixteenth century, a military engineer named Ramelli laid before his boss, King Henry III of France, blueprints for an amphibian tank. This granddaddy of the panzer was armored in the prow—providing a metal sheathed nest for lurking sharpshooters. On land,

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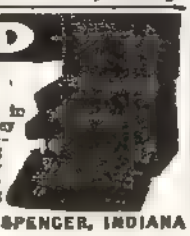
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it would trundle into battle simply by being pushed along. But its inventor had more elaborate plans for his brainchild when it took to the water; hand-worked paddle wheels, operated from within, would drive the machine forward on its swimming assault.

Then, in 1870, a lithographer named Albert Robida published prints picturing a hurricane of mobile redoubts, ironclad and steam driven, storming to the attack; above them, he showed a swarm of flying fortresses. France nearly died laughing. Seventy years later, she just died . . . a grim warning indeed to scoffers at "fantasy"!

Nor did parachute troops go unprophesied. For in 1892 a German cartoonist laid out his conception of a locust-like cloud of parachutists, equipped with bat wings and descending in orderly formation, fluttering into the fray!

Yes, it certainly seems that the fantasy of each epoch acts as a kind of eternal Nostradamus—blueprinting, in no uncertain terms, the "Shape of Things to Come"!

The One and Only

From Kansas City, Kansas, T. H. Smith writes:

I am writing to you at this time and wish to say that WEIRD TALES still produces an outstanding quality magazine.

More success to you in the future and may there be another Lovecraft on the horizon of the up and moving WEIRD, portrayer of the unusual and bizarre!

Atlantis a Fact?

Recent charts have established the existence in the Atlantic of a huge underwater range of mountains extending for thousands of miles at a comparatively low depth. Fables, ancient manuscripts and myths, religious beliefs and the Bibles of dead religions, gods, statues, frescoes and pyramids—all the surviving traces of vanished cultures and civilizations show an almost incredible identity on either side of the Atlantic. Atlantis is more than a theory; it is practically a fact.

9 Rockefeller Plaza New York, N. Y.

Write to MARTIN WARE, SECRETARY

● This is your club—a medium to help you get together with other fantasy and science-fiction fans. Readers wanted it—they wrote in telling us how much they would enjoy meeting others of similar tastes.

● Membership is very simple: just drop us a line, so that we can enroll you on the club roster, and publish your name and address in the magazine.

● A membership card carrying the above design—personal token of your fellowship with the weird and the fantastic—will be sent on request. (A stamped, addressed envelope should be enclosed.)

Splendid Medium

The WEIRD TALES CLUB is a splendid medium for those wishing to contact others of similar interests. I suggest that the department be given more space. A short fact article published in each issue would prove interesting to those interested in the occult. Material of this kind could be contributed by readers, among which are many sincere followers of different branches of philosophy and occultism. This would make WEIRD TALES a magazine for fiction lovers as well as the more serious minded readers, thus WEIRD TALES would be different from the average run of pulp paper magazines that clave to the weird and fantasy. Your publication is GOOD.

I have been a reader of WEIRD TALES for a number of years and believe it is the best publication of its kind on the newsstands. There have been various magazines devoted to the weird and fantasy; they appear on the market and for a while enjoy popularity, then suddenly vanish into nothingness, but WEIRD TALES seems to have weathered the test of time. The reason is simple enough, by giving the reading public what they

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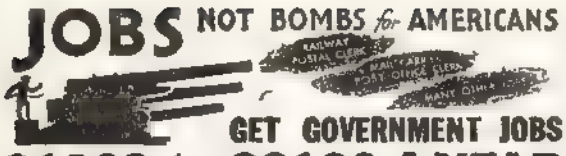

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want it has never failed to hold their interest.

I would like to hear from other readers whose interest lies in "Oriental Philosophy," "Buddhistic Ideals" and "Occultism." Will be pleased to hear from either sex and from persons of all ages. With best wishes and kindest regards I am,

Sincerely yours,
Alexander MacDowell.

181 Bay 14th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Branch in Peoria

As a member of the WEIRD TALES CLUB, I'm writing to let you know that I am attempting to form a fan-club of fantastic and science fiction readers in Peoria and Central Illinois. All members will be urged to join the WEIRD TALES CLUB. All who are interested in this proposition are asked to write to me, and get in on the ground floor!

Would appreciate your printing this, as Cent. Ill fans need a few horrific jolts to make 'em rise, screaming with agony and fear, from their easy-chairs!

Yours for more Quinn, Gruber, and Derleth.
Edward C. Connor.

929 Butler St., Peoria, Ill.

Sea Rover "Joins Up"

Aboard *S. S. Olean*

I am a steady reader of WEIRD TALES and believe I should become a member of the WEIRD TALES CLUB.

Not only can I write letters to the rest, and discuss and exchange a few weird tales, but I can also see several of them personally. I travel over most of the Atlantic Coast, Gulf of Mexico and the islands of the Caribbean Sea also. It might prove very interesting to meet the members personally.

Please enroll me in this fine club which has proved very interesting to an outsider.

Yours sincerely,
Glenn Reid.

c/o Capt. Vanden Heuval, P. O. Box 151,
G. P. O., Staten Island, New York.

Believes W. T. Has Mission

Your *Werewolf* Howls (November issue) is truly one of those tales—one that raises one of the leading questions that underlies search into the possible truth concerning lycanthropy. Frank Gruber's *The Book of the Dead,* in the issue, is also one of those tales that is really worthy of note and of thought.

A member of your WEIRD TALES CLUB for some time, I'd be glad to hear from those of your members who are sincere seekers after the truths that are a closed book to the average "eyes that see not and ears that hear not." I believe we are living in times when it is more necessary

than ever for some of us to interpret those truths correctly—for the time is coming when Christianity itself must be interpreted correctly. In an entertaining way, I believe WEIRD TALES has a mission to perform—for the sowing of a seed that may lead to speculation and study and final discovery of underlying truths by which we may live can first reach many people only through such a medium as you offer. I'd be glad to hear from WEIRD TALES CLUB members who agree with me, and whose object is also to find the real thread of truth in life that really underlies most "weird" tales.

With continued hopes for your renewal of monthly publication, and best wishes for the continued increased membership in your WEIRD TALES CLUB, I am,

Sincerely yours,

Embe True

151 West Cliff St., Somerville, New Jersey.

Makes Life Worth Living

It delighted me to learn that readers of Weird Tales Magazine can now communicate with one another. I have been a devotee—an addict or what-you-will—of your publication for sixteen years. Often I was hard put to reason out why this form of fantasy fiction held such allure. . . . I wondered what sort of readers, beside myself, bought the magazine. Since then I have learned the value of such reading. It not only takes me out of the humdrum, sordid realms of reality—not the least of its values—but it makes me think.

For in order to fully appreciate the merit of some of the stories, it is necessary to have a broad knowledge; including mythology, ancient and modern religions, history, science, philosophy, psychology, and even a smattering of languages. Being drawn toward learning more concerning the numerous subjects upon which the stories are based I found myself being introduced to the classics, the authors of the world's finest literature, and the great thinkers. And W.T. has made life worth while—for conscious imagination is the romantic gilding that gives life its worth.

I like studying the machinations of the minds of the authors in constructing the weaving of fact with fantasy to create their fiction; and I am grateful to the authors who keep my imagination and thinking capacity keenly alive and working.

There seem to be only two members to the WEIRD TALES CLUB, at present, in the vicinity of Philadelphia; I am hoping the group grows so we may be able to form a Fantasy Society such as the one existing in California.

Please enroll my name as a member of the club. And here's to greater success in the future of Weird Tales Magazine.

Dorothy Lorch

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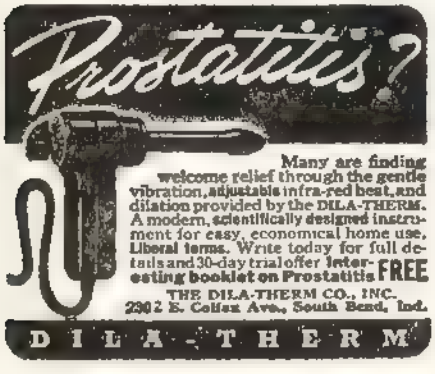

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From the Frozen North

Lady or no lady, I read W. T. mag, and enjoy it right along with the men. Seventeen of my seventeen years of life have been spent in Alaska, and, as there is not so awfully much to do, reading good material has become an obsession to me. I consider W. T. "good material."

Please enroll me in WEIRD TALES CLUB, and send me a membership card. Any girls or boys wishing to write me, do so, and I will tell you all about Eskimoes, igloos, and dogteams.

M. Annabelle Edwards
Douglas, Alaska, Box 1222.

"Fascinating"

I am thirty-nine years of age, and, having been a reader of WEIRD TALES for as long as I can remember, I am doing now what I should have done long ago, and that is to tell your editors how much I have enjoyed this magazine all through the years.

It is with unabated interest that I look forward to each issue; since things and stories that are unusual, bizarre, supernatural—in other words, weird—fascinate me and provide delightful relaxation from every-day work and routine, I would welcome word from other club members about this subject, the exchange of thoughts and opinions and experiences related to it, and, if possible, to meet personally some of the other members genuinely interested in weird tales and things.

More power to WEIRD TALES!

Cordially yours,
George Ornstein.
130 West 42nd Street,
New York, N. Y.

NEW MEMBERS

Richard E. Gardner, 2150 Reel St., Harrisburg, Pa.
Paul Z. Ohlheiser, 1688 Woodsview, Lincoln, Nebr.
R. P. Harle, Box 363, Del Rio, Texas.
Paul Bryant, 616 S. Virgil Ave., care of G. H. Thompson, Los Angeles, Calif.
Miss Doris Hamm, 1454 University Ave., New York, N. Y.
Martha Czajkowski, 67 Walnut St., Natrona, Pa.
John M. Cunningham, 2050 Gilbert St., Beaumont, Texas
Henry Haase, 509 S. Grand View St., Los Angeles, Calif.
Fred De Blon, 112 Braun Ave., Hi-Park, New Brunswick, N. J.
George Childs, 535 Madison St., Salisbury, Md.
Murray East, Charles Hotel, Miami, Fla.
Robert Richel, 12-13 Ellis Ave., Fairlawn, N. J.
Richard V. Polk, 709 E. 42nd St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
J. L. Brown, 1807 5th Ave., Sacramento, Calif.
Harold Huffaker, 530 N. Court St., Visalia, Calif.
Franklin L. Moore, Co. B, 70th Tank Bn. (M), Fort Geo. C. Meade, Md.
Arthur R. Graves, 1519 S. Mansfield, Los Angeles, Calif
Ray Weigand, 1893 E. 50th St., Cleveland, Ohio

NEW MEMBERS *(Continued)*

Wm. Chaplin, 83rd Ord. Co. (HM), Unit Training Center, Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Md.
Grace M. Logan, Box 24, Fairfield, Iowa
Charles A. Bastin, 5740 Franklin Ave., Hollywood, Calif.
Lawrence Burman, 5246 Eddy St., Chicago, Ill.
Harriet Whipple, 3350 Lealman Ave., St. Petersburg, Fla.
James J. Schierbrock, Denver, Colo.
Bill Stoy, 140-92 Burden Crescent, Jamaica, N. Y.
Ray Carrillo, 101 Stewart Rd., Columbia, Mo.
A. M. Slusher, 711 E. 6th St., Long Beach, Calif.
Harold Knox, 259 S. 3rd Ave., Mount Vernon, N. Y.
Nevin T. Hayes, Hq. and Hq. Btry, 34th F. A. A. P. O. No. 9, Fort Bragg, N. C.
Abby Lu Ashley, 86 Upton Ave., Battle Creek, Mich.
W. Sherman, 2138 W. Pierce Ave., Chicago, Ill.
Mrs. Dolores Tapi, 42-47th St., Weehawken, N. J.
Edwin Goodwin, 952 Princeton Ave., Trenton, N. J.
David S. Grab, 75-07 185th St., Flushing, L. I., N. Y.
Richard M. Smith, P. O. Box 212, Tallahassee, Fla.
Mile H. France, Carbondale, Ohio.
Curtis Harrington, 750 Beaumont Ave., Beaumont, Calif.
Jerry Scardino, 143 Nevada St., San Francisco, Calif.
G. R. Glendening, 5477 N. 38th St., Milwaukee, Wisc.
Wm. E. Wright, Springs, N. Y. (East Hampton)
Gilmore Rhea, 237 9th St., Wood River, Ill.
Sam A. Matter, 305 Hicks St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
Mrs. E. Robertson, 2333 Rutger St., St. Louis, Mo.
Donald Long, 6408 So. Van Ness Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.
Lyle Gable, 777 Kennedy St., Meadville, Pa.
Kurt G. Schweingruber, Co. F, 127th Inf., 32nd Div., Camp Livingston, La.
Bob Finke, 1913 State Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.
Conrad Grumann, 633½ W. Vernon St., Los Angeles, Calif.
John Carlson, 513-57th St., Brooklyn, N. Y.
George Stanton, P. O. Box 148, Parcel Post Station, Worcester, Mass.
Wm. Force, 1267 Georgia St., Rahway, N. J.
Harold Payne, 313 Choice St., Greenville, S. C.
Mary E. Gilmore, Route No. 1, Box 545, Port Orchard, Wash.
Danny S. Szymborsk, 18639 Klinger, Detroit, Mich.
Stanley J. Gajos, 18639 Klinger, Detroit, Mich.
Charles Lucas, 118 7th St., Bridgeport, Pa.
Pauline Kardisci, R. F. D. No. 2, Box 440B Pottsville, Pa.

We're sorry that lack of space prevents the inclusion of the names of all New Members. The rest will appear next time.

S. O. S.!

I wonder if any club members would care to send a poor sick "shut-in girl" any issues of WEIRD TALES of dates back in, say, 1931, 1932, 1933, or further back? I would repay by sending novelties and postage stamps from here. Not being able to get around I can appreciate how truly great "Weird Tales" really are. I want to wish you and all the club members the very best of luck!

Sincerely,

Joyce Dayl.

P. O. Box 61,
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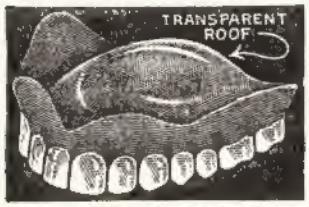

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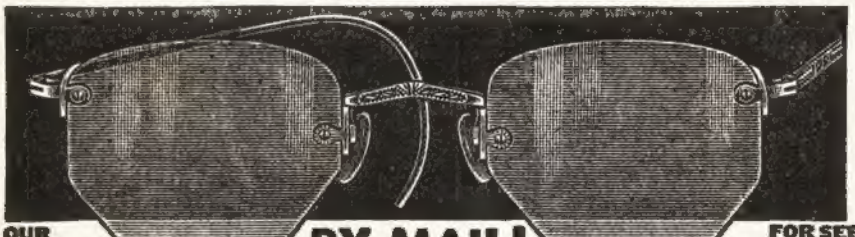

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Charles Atlas

—actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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